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*David Hitchens.*

# TAM O' SHANTER



ALL ABOUT  
TAM O' SHANTER

WITH BRIEF PAPERS ON  
Alloway Kirk, "Souter Johnny,"  
Captain Grose, etc.

EDITED BY  
JOHN D. ROSS, LL. D.

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of "Burns's Highland Mary," "Burns's  
Clarinda," "Burns's Bonnie Jean," etc.*

· WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY CHARLES H. GOVAN

THE RAEBURN BOOK CO.  
185 GRAND STREET  
MANHATTAN, NEW YORK CITY  
1900

PR 4314  
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J. W. F. BOWLES  
BROOKLYN

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THIS VOLUME IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED

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HUNTER MACCULLOCH, Esq.

(EX-PRESIDENT OF THE BROOKLYN WRITERS' CLUB; AUTHOR OF  
"ROBERT BURNS; A CENTENARY ODE;" "FROM DAWN TO DUSK;" ETC.)

IN APPRECIATION OF HIS GENIUS AS A POET,  
HIS NOBLE CHARACTER AS A MAN, AND HIS INTENSE  
ENTHUSIASM FOR

SCOTLAND AND ROBERT BURNS.

JOHN D. ROSS.



## INTRODUCTION.

BY CHARLES H. GOVAN.

The story of "Tam o' Shanter" is very much like that of "Rip Van Winkle." Indeed, "Rip Van Winkle" has been called "the Dutch Tam o' Shanter." Rip was fond of the bottle. Tam was equally fond of the bottle. Rip's wife was a scold. Tam's spouse was also a scold. Rip met with a supernatural adventure while abroad in a thunder-storm, and that is precisely what befell Tam.

The hero of this poetic tale—which, like "Hallowe'en," reflects the superstition of the Scottish peasantry—was Douglas Graham, of the farm of Shanter; but it is not necessary to call him by any other title than the rhythmical one bestowed on him by the poet.

Tipplers are like boys, never happy unless away from home; and so, one day Tam o' Shanter escaped from his wife's clamorous tongue and, mounting his gray mare Meg, galloped off as fast as he could to

the neighboring town of Ayr. Here the truant lost no time. He was bent on a spree, which could only be enjoyed to the full in the society of that choice spirit, Souter Johnny—Shoemaker Johnny—his companion in many a long carouse. So the souter was beguiled from his last, and the congenial pair straightway betook themselves to their favorite inn, where a warm welcome and the best of “yill” awaited them. When the evening closed in Tam found himself snugly seated at a fireside far more dear to him than his own and almost as familiar—the souter at his elbow, convulsing him with the queerest stories; a jolly boniface supplying him with foaming draughts of powerful Scotch ale; and a buxom landlady beaming upon him through fragrant tobacco-mists. Never was the souter more deliciously droll; never did ale taste better; never was the landlord’s laugh more unctuous or the landlady’s smile more gracious—she was a much more agreeable woman, Tam could not help thinking, than Mrs. Graham. And Tam made the most of the occasion. Like the truant boy at the circus, he took no thought of the reckoning to come. Sufficient for the hour was the enjoyment thereof. His zest was as great as though the revelry were taking place under his own roof-tree, with the

sanction of a compliant wife. Nay, it was greater, for is it not the fruit which is forbidden that most delights the human palate? In his boisterous gayety Tam heeded not the specter which obtruded upon the feast. But we may be sure that the specter became more menacing as the evening advanced; that she took on the form and manner of his objurgatory spouse; that she dropped her poison, in increasing doses, into every cup; that she jealously interrupted his delightful tête-à-tête with his comely hostess; that she whispered in his ear of the long and dismal ride to come, with a curtain-lecture of more than ordinary length and bitterness at the end; and that at last, when the dreaded hour of midnight arrived, she pointed imperiously to the door and bade him begone! We may easily fancy the drunk but docile farmer as he “stachered out” in obedience to the mandate and floundered into the saddle, his jovial host standing ready with a stirrup-cup (supplementary to the *doch an doris*); the repeated admonitions screamed from the doorway by the anxious hostess; the concerted farewell; and the parting joke flung after him by the inexhaustible souter, as Meg started on her record-breaking run.

When Tam cleared the friendly shelter of the town

and reached the open country, he found himself at the mercy of the wildest storm that ever blew in Scotland—at least in his generation. The lightning flared, the thunder crashed, the rain rattled, and the wind howled. The farmer's homeward course lay past the scene of many a dreadful story, told late at night by smouldering peat fires to shuddering listeners. Here an unfortunate pedler had perished miserably in the snow ; a little farther on, where a huge rock stood near a clump of birch trees, a drunken "ne'er-do-weel" had broken his useless neck ; some distance farther on a party of hunters had one day found a murdered babe ; on yet farther was an abandoned well, guarded by an aged hawthorn tree, where a wretched old crone had hanged herself. But the most fearsome landmark of all was Kirk Allo-way ; a little, old, ruined church near a bridge, spanning the river Doon, over which Tam had to cross. Any old wife could tell you that this was the worst haunted place in all Scotland. It is probable that as Tam charged headlong through the *inferno* of warring elements, his confused wits busy with excuses to be offered to the frowning Kate, he wished himself well past this dreaded spot. Emerging at length from an adjacent wood into full view of the once-

sacred edifice, he looked anxiously toward it and beheld a spectacle that might well have frozen the blood of any man whose veins were not superheated by "guid Scotch drink." The old church was ablaze with a weird light, streaming from candles held in the rigid hands of dead men, who stood in open coffins ranged against the walls; and through the doorless doorway and the windowless casements he beheld a concourse of warlocks and witches dancing like mad about a long table, on which was displayed an assortment of corpses and other cheerful objects. The music proceeded from a huge black animal, the shape of a dog and the size of a bear, ensconced in a window-seat at the eastern extremity of the kirk; which Tam knew instinctively to be the great enemy of mankind himself—for surely no one else could have played the bagpipes with such unearthly skill. Drink had made Tam insensible to fear. Instead of fleeing as a sober man would have done, he rode boldly forward. The facetiously inclined may see in this another point of similarity between the heroes of Burns and Irving, and declare that Tam here showed the same quality that distinguished the imperturbable Rip Van Winkle in his colloquy with the ghostly pirates, namely, Dutch courage. The hard ride and

the startling character of his adventure had partially cleared his brain, but the scene before him affected his senses with a new madness.

It is related of the poet Longfellow that when he returned to America in the early forties, "he found the world drunken with the grace of Fanny Elssler." It was this species of intoxication which now seized upon Tam. For prominent in the dance—her beauty and shapeliness accentuated by her gruesome surroundings—was a young and graceful witch possessed of extraordinary strength and agility. Her attire was of the scantiest, and in her wild abandon she executed such astounding leaps, bounds, and pirouettes as would have made any opera première, or even the adored Elssler herself, turn green with envy. Tam became so enthusiastic at her performance that he involuntarily applauded—and betrayed his presence. Instantly the lights were extinguished, and forth upon the midnight air, their phosphorescent forms gleaming through the darkness, came the whole infernal host, all eager to fasten their clutches on the unhappy mortal who had dared to disturb their orgies. Tam wheeled his horse and made for the bridge. Any one versed in the folk-lore of Scotland will tell you that if you are pursued under like circumstances and you



can manage to reach the middle of a running stream, you are safe—the arch-fiend himself is powerless against you. The keystone of the bridge became, therefore, Tam's objective point; and to it he urged his sturdy mare with voice, whip, and spur.

Under the influence of terror Meg developed, a speed that might easily have won her the Derby. But the poor beast was not striving against earthly competitors. Nannie, the athletic witch, showed herself as superior in the chase as in the dance, and gained most appallingly on poor Tam. Horse, rider, and witch reached the bridge at almost the same instant; and just as Meg was in the act of clearing the keystone the witch caught her by the tail, which instantly came off in the infernal grasp as though blasted by a lightning stroke. But the mischief ended here. The river Doon now lay between the baffled demons and their intended victim. The tailless Maggie and her now thoroughly sobered master finished their homeward journey in safety; and it is to be hoped that, as water had proved to be Tam's salvation on this occasion, he was partial to it ever afterward.

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# TAM O' SHANTER.

## A TALE.

"Of Brownies and of Bogillies full is this Buke."

GAWIN DOUGLAS.

When chapman billies leave the street,  
And drouthy niebors, niebors meet ;  
As market days are wearing late,  
An' folk begin to tak the gate ;  
While we sit bousing at the nappy,  
An' getting fou and unco happy,  
We think na on the lang Scots miles,  
The mosses, waters, slaps, and stiles,  
That lie between us and our hame,  
Whare sits our sulky, sullen dame,  
Gathering her brows like gathering storm,  
Nursing her wrath to keep it warm.

This truth fand honest TAM O' SHANTER,  
As he frae Ayr ae night did canter  
(Auld Ayr, whom ne'er a town surpasses,  
For honest men and bonnie lasses).

O Tam ! had'st thou but been sae wise,  
As ta'en thy ain wife Kate's advise !  
She tauld thee weel thou was a skellum,  
A bletherin, blusterin, drunken blellum ;  
That frae November till October,  
Ae market-day thou wasna sober ;  
That ilka melder wi' the miller,  
Thou sat as lang as thou had siller ;  
That ev'ry naig was ca'd a shoe on  
The smith and thee gat roaring fou on ;  
That at the Lord's house, ev'n on Sunday,  
Thou drank wi' Kirkton Jean till Monday.  
She prophesied, that, late or soon,  
Thou wad be found, deep drown'd in Doon,  
Or catch'd wi' warlocks in the mirk,  
By Alloway's auld, haunted kirk.

Ah, gentle dames ! it gars me greet,  
To think how mony counsels sweet,  
How mony lengthen'd, sage advices,  
The husband frae the wife despises !

But to our tale : Ae market night,  
Tam had got planted unco right,  
Fast by an ingle, bleezing finely,

Wi' reaming swats, that drank divinely ;  
And at his elbow, Souter Johnny,  
His ancient, trusty, drouthy crony ;  
Tam lo'ed him like a vera brither ;  
They had been fou for weeks thegither.  
The night drave on wi, sangs an' clatter ;  
And aye the ale was growing better.  
The landlady and Tam grew gracious,  
Wi' favors secret, sweet and precious :  
The souter tauld his queerest stories ;  
The landlord's laugh was ready chorus :  
The storm without might rair and rustle,  
Tam didna mind the storm and whistle.

Care, mad to see a man sae happy.  
E'en drown'd himsel amang the nappy.  
As bees flee hame wi' lades o' treasure,  
The minutes wing'd their way wi' pleasure :  
Kings may be blest but Tam was glorious,  
O'er a' the ills o' life victorious !

But pleasures are like poppies spread,  
You seize the flow'r, its bloom is shed ;  
Or like the snow falls in the river,

A moment white—then melts for ever;  
Or like the borealis race,  
That flit ere you can point their place;  
Or like the rainbow's lovely form  
Evanishing amid the storm.  
Nae man can tether time nor tide,  
The hour approaches Tam maun ride—  
That hour, o' night's black arch the key-stane,  
That dreary hour Tam mounts his beast in;  
And sic a night he took the road in,  
As ne'er poor sinner was abroad in.

The wind blew as 'twad blawn its last;  
The rattling showers rose on the blast;  
The speedy gleams the darkness swallow'd;  
Loud, deep, and lang the thunder bellow'd:  
That night, a child might understand,  
The deil had business on his hand.

Weel mounted on his gray mare Meg,  
A better never lifted leg,  
Tam skelpit on thro' dub and mire,  
Despising wind and rain and fire;  
Whiles holding fast his gude blue bonnet,



Whiles crooning o'er an auld Scots sonnet,  
Whiles glow'ring round wi' prudent cares,  
Lest bogles catch him unawares;  
Kirk Alloway was drawing nigh,  
Where ghaists and houlets nightly cry.

By this time he was cross the ford,  
Whare in the snaw the chapman smoor'd;  
And past the birks and meikle stane,  
Whare drunken Charlie brak 's neck-bane;  
And thro' the whins, and by the cairn,  
Whare hunters fand the murder'd bairn;  
And near the thorn, aboon the well,  
Whare Mungo's mither hang'd hersel.  
Before him Doon pours all his floods,  
The doubling storm roars thro' the woods,  
The lightnings flash frae pole to pole,  
Near and more near the thunders roll,  
When, glimmering thro' the groaning trees,  
Kirk Alloway seem'd in a bleeze,  
Thro' ilka bore the beams were glancing,  
And loud resounded mirth and dancing.

Inspiring bold John Barleycorn!  
What dangers thou canst make us scorn!

Wi' tippenny, we fear nae evil;  
Wi' usquebae, we'll face the devil!  
The swats sae ream'd in Tammie's noddle,  
Fair play, he car'd nae deils a boddle,  
But Maggie stood, right sair astonished,  
Till, by the heel and hand admonish'd,  
She ventur'd forward on the light;  
And, wow! Tam saw an unco sight!  
Warlocks and witches in a dance;  
Nae cotillon, brent new frae France,  
But hornpipes, jigs, strathspeys, and reels  
Put life and mettle in their heels.  
A winnock-bunker in the east,  
There sat auld Nick, in shape o' beast;  
A towzie tyke, black, grim, and large,  
To gie them music was his charge:  
He screw'd the pipes and gart them skirl,  
Till roof and rafters a' did dirl.  
Coffins stood round, like open presses,  
That shaw'd the dead in their last dresses;  
And (by some devilish cantrip sleight)  
Each in its cauld hand held a light,  
By which heroic Tam was able  
To note upon the haly table,  
A murderer's banes, in gibbet-airns;

Twa span-lang, wee, unchristen'd bairns;  
A thief, new-cuttet frae a rape,  
Wi' his last gasp his gab did gape;  
Five tomahawks, wi' blude red-rusted:  
Five scimitars, wi' murder crusted;  
A garter, which a babe had strangled:  
A knife a father's throat had mangled,  
Whom his ain son of life bereft,  
The grey hairs yet stack to the heft;  
Wi' mair o' horrible and awfu',  
Which even to name wad be unlawfu'.

As Tammie glower'd, amaz'd and curious,  
The mirth and fun grew fast and furious;  
The piper loud and louder blew,  
The dancers quick and quicker flew,  
They reel'd, they set, they crossed, they cleekit,  
Till ilka carlin swat and reekit,  
And coost her duddies to the wark,  
And linket at it in her sark!

Now Tam, O Tam ! had thae been queans,  
A' plump and strapping in their teens!  
Their sarks, instead o' creeshie flannen,  
Been snaw-white seventeen hundred linnen!—

Thir breeks o' mine, my only pair,  
That ance were plush, o' guid blue hair,  
I wad ha gi'en them off my hurdies,  
For ae blink o' the bonnie burdies!  
But wither'd beldams, auld and droll,  
Rigwoodie hags wad spean a foal,  
Louping an' flinging on a crummock,  
I wonder didna turn thy stomach.

But Tam kend what was what fu, brawlie:  
There was ae winsome wench and walie,  
That night enlisted in the core,  
Lang after kend on Carrick shore;  
(For mony a beast to dead she shot  
And perish'd mony a bonnie boat,  
And shook baith meikle corn and bear,  
And held the country-side in fear);  
Her cutty sark, o' Paisley harn,  
That while a lassie she had worn,  
In longitude tho' sorely scanty,  
It was her best, and she was vauntie.  
Ah! little kend thy reverend grannie,  
That sark she coft for her wee Nannie,  
Wi' twa pund Scots ('twas a' her riches),  
Wad ever grac'd a dance of witches!

But here my Muse her wing maun cow'r,  
Sic flights are far beyond her power;  
To sing how Nannie lap and flang  
(A souple jade she was and strang),  
And how Tam stood, like ane bewitch'd,  
And thought his very een enrich'd;  
Even Satan glowr'd, and fidg'd fu' fain,  
And hotch'd and blew wi' might and main:  
Till first ae caper, syne anither,  
Tam tint his reason a' thegither,  
And roars out: "Weel done, Cutty-sark!"  
And in an instant all was dark:  
And scarcely had he Maggie rallied,  
When out the hellish legion sallied.

As bees bizz out wi' angry fyke,  
When plundering herds assail their byke;  
As open pussie's mortal foes,  
When, pop! she starts before their nose;  
As eager runs the market-crowd,  
When "Catch the thief!" resounds aloud;  
So Maggie runs, the witches follow,  
Wi' mony an eldritch skreech and hollow.

Ah, Tam! ah, Tam! thou'll get thy fairin!  
In hell they'll roast thee like a herrin!  
In vain thy Kate awaits thy coming!  
Kate soon will be a woefu' woman!  
Now, do thy speedy utmost, Meg;  
And win the key-stane o' the brig;  
There, at them thou thy tail may toss,  
A running stream they darena cross.  
But ere the key-stane she could make,  
The fient a tail she had to shake!  
For Nannie, far before the rest,  
Hard upon noble Maggie prest,  
And flew at Tam wi' furious ettle;  
But little wist she Maggie's mettle!  
Ae spring brought off her master hale,  
But left behind her ain gray tail:  
The carlin claught her by the rump,  
And left poor Maggie scarce a stump.

Now, wha this tale o' truth shall read,  
Ilk man, and mother's son, take heed:  
Whene'er to drink you are inclin'd,  
Or cutty-sarks rin in your mind,  
Think! ye may buy the joys o'er dear,  
Remember Tam o' Shanter's mare.

## WITCH STORIES

### RELATING TO ALLOWAY KIRK.

BY ROBERT BURNS.

“Among the witch stories which I have heard relating to Alloway Kirk,” said the poet in a letter to Captain Grose, “I distinctly remember only two or three. Upon a stormy night, amid whistling squalls of wind and bitter blasts of hail—in short, on such a night as the devil would choose to take the air in—a farmer or a farmer’s servant was plodding and plashing homeward with the plough-irons on his shoulder, having been getting some repairs on them at a neighbouring smithy. His way lay by the Kirk of Alloway, and being rather on the anxious look-out in approaching the place, so well known to be a favorite haunt of the devil, and the devil’s friends and emissaries, he was struck aghast by discovering, through the horrors of the stormy night, a light which on his nearer approach plainly showed itself to proceed from the haunted edifice. Whether he had been fortified from above on his devout supplication, as is customary

with people when they suspect the immediate presence of Satan, or whether according to another custom, he had got courageously drunk at the smithy, I will not pretend to determine; but so it was that he ventured to go up to—nay, into the very kirk. As luck would have it his temerity came off unpunished. The members of the infernal junto were all out on some midnight business or other, and he saw nothing but a kind of kettle or caldron depending from the roof over the fire, simmering some heads of unchristened children, limbs of malefactors, etc., for the business of the night. It was in for a penny in a pound with the honest ploughman, so without ceremony he unhooked the caldron from off the fire and pouring out its damnable ingredients, inverted it on his head and carried it fairly home, where it remained long in the family a living evidence of the truth of the story.

“Another story which I can prove to be equally authentic was as follows:

“On a market day in the town of Ayr, a farmer from Carrick, and consequently whose way lay by the very gate of Alloway kirkyard, in order to cross the river Doon at the old bridge, which is about two or three hundred yards farther on than the said gate,



had been detained by his business, till by the time he reached Alloway it was the wizard hour, between night and morning.

“ Though he was terrified with a blaze streaming from the kirk, yet as it is a well-known fact that to turn back on these occasions is running by far the greatest risk of mischief, he prudently advanced on his road. When he had reached the gate of the kirk-yard, he was surprised and entertained through the ribs and arches of an old Gothic window, which still faces the highway, to see a dance of witches merrily footing it round their old sooty blackguard master, who was keeping them all alive with the power of his bagpipe. The farmer stopping his horse to observe them a little, could plainly descry the faces of many old women of his acquaintance and neighborhood. How the gentleman was dressed tradition does not say, but the ladies were all in their smocks; and one of them happening unluckily to have a smock which was considerably too short to answer all the purposes of that piece of dress, our farmer was so tickled that he involuntarily burst out with a loud laugh: “ Weel luppen, Maggie wi’ the short sark!” and recollecting himself, instantly spurred his horse to the top of his speed. I need not mention the universally

known fact that no diabolical power can pursue you beyond the middle of a running stream. Luckily it was for the poor farmer that the river Doon was so near, for notwithstanding the speed of his horse which was a good one, against he reached the middle of the arch of the bridge, and consequently the middle of the stream the pursuing vengeful hags were so close at his heels, that one of them actually sprang to seize him, but it was too late, nothing was on her side of the stream but the horse's tail, which immediately gave way at her infernal grip, as if blasted by a stroke of lightning, but the farmer was beyond her reach. However the unsightly tail-less condition of the vigorous steed was to the last hour of the noble creature's life, an awful warning to the Carrick farmers not to stay too late in Ayr markets.

“The last relation I shall give, though equally true, is not so well identified as the two former with regard to the scene, but as the best authorities give it for Alloway, I shall relate it.

“On a summer's evening about the time nature has put on her sables to mourn the expiry of the cheerful day, a shepherd-boy belonging to a farm in the immediate neighborhood of Alloway Kirk, had just folded his charge and was returning home. As he

passed the kirk, in the adjoining field, he fell in with a crowd of men and women who were busy pulling stems of the plant ragwort. He observed that as each person pulled a ragwort, she or he got astride of it and called out, 'up horsie!' on which the ragwort flew off, like Pegasus through the air with its rider. The foolish boy likewise pulled his ragwort, and cried with the rest, 'up horsie!' and strange to tell, away he flew with the company. The first stage at which the cavalcade stopt was a merchant's wine cellar in Bordeaux, where without saying by your leave, they quaffed away at the best the cellar could afford until the morning, foe to the imps and works of darkness, threatened to throw light on the matter, and frightened them away from their carousals.

"The poor shepherd lad being equally a stranger to the scene and liquor, heedlessly got himself drunk, and when the rest took horse, he fell asleep, and was found so next day by some of the people belonging to the merchant. Somebody that understood Scotch asking him what he was, he said, such a one's herd in Alloway, and by some means or other getting home again, he lived to tell the world the wondrous tale."

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"This letter is interesting," says Alexander Smith,

“as showing the actual body of tradition on which Burns had to work—the soil out of which the consummate poem grew like a flower. And it is worthy of notice also how out of the letter, some of the best things in the poem have come; ‘such a night as the devil would choose to take the air in’, being for instance, the suggestion of the couplet,

That night a child might understand,  
The Deil had business on his hand.

It is pleasant to know that Burns thought well of ‘Tam o’ Shanter’.”

# HOW TAM O' SHANTER CAME TO BE WRITTEN.

BY GILBERT BURNS.

When my father feued his little property near Alloway Kirk, the wall of the churchyard had gone to ruin, and cattle had free liberty of pasture in it. My father with two or three neighbors joined in an application to the Town Council of Ayr, who were superiors of the adjoining land, for liberty to rebuild it, and raised by subscription a sum for enclosing this ancient cemetery with a wall; hence he came to consider it as his burial place, and we learned that reverence for it that people generally have for the burial place of their ancestors. My brother was living at Ellisland when Captain Grose, on his peregrinations through Scotland, stayed some time at Carse House, in the neighborhood, with Captain Robert Riddell of Glenriddle, a particular friend of my brother's. The antiquarian and the poet were 'unco pack and thick together'. Robert requested of Captain Grose, when he should come to Ayrshire, that he would make a

drawing of Alloway Kirk, as it was the burial place of his father, and where he himself had a sort of claim to lay down his bones when they should be no longer serviceable to him, and added by way of encouragement, that it was the scene of many a good story of witches and apparitions—of which he knew the Captain was very fond. The Captain agreed to the request, provided the poet would furnish a witch story to be printed along with it. “Tam o’ Shanter” was produced on this occasion and was first published in “Grose’s Antiquities of Scotland.”

# THE REAL TAM O' SHANTER, AND SOUTER JOHNNY.

BY DR. ROBERT CHAMBERS.

The country people in Ayrshire, contrary to their wont, unmythicize the narrations of Burns, and point both to a real Tam and a Souter Johnny and to a natural occurrence as the basis of the fiction. Their story is as follows:

The hero was an honest farmer named Douglas Graham, who lived at Shanter, between Turnberry and Colzean. His wife, Helen M' Taggart, was much addicted to superstitious beliefs. Graham, dealing in malt, went to Ayr every market day, whither he was frequently accompanied by a shoe-making neighbor, John Davidson, who dealt a little in leather. The two would often linger to a late hour in the taverns at the market town. One night when riding home more than usually late, by himself, in a storm of wind and rain, Graham in passing over Brown Carrick Hill, near the bridge of Doon, lost his bonnet which contained the money he had drawn that day at the mar-

ket. To avoid the scolding of his wife, he imposed upon her credulity with a story of witches seen at Alloway Kirk, but did not the less return to Carrick Hill to seek for his money, which he had the satisfaction to find with his bonnet in a plantation near the road. It is supposed that Burns when in his youth living among the Carrick farmers at Kirkoswald, became acquainted with Graham and Davidson, studied their grotesque habits, and heard of their various adventures, including that of Alloway Kirk, though perhaps without learning that it was the imposture of a husband upon a too-credulous wife. Douglas Graham and John Davidson, the supposed originals of Tam o' Shanter and Souter Johnny, have long reposed in the churchyard of Kirkoswald, where the former has a handsome monument bearing a pious inscription.



## TAM O' SHANTER.

BY J. M. MURDOCK.

One of Burns' innumerable gifts was the painting of spooks like human beings. We do not mean the actual process of painting, as that task is too herculean even for a great poet or the editor of a spookish organ called *Borderland*. What we mean to imply is that Burns, when dealing with devils, ghosts, fairies, brownies, witches, etc., cajoles his readers into the belief that the mythical *habitues* of Alloway Kirk were flesh and blood like ourselves, and it is here where the *modus operandi* of Burns appeals with irresistible force to his countrymen. The poem of Tam o' Shanter is of course not founded upon fact, yet the manner in which the bard deals with the memorable ride is so enchanting, and the players in the drama are so life like, that millions flock to the route—or, more accurately speaking, a portion of the route—traversed by Tam, if not to look for witches and warlocks, at least to explore the region and to chuckle over the pandemonium in the kirk, its effect upon the

hero of the occasion and his hair-breadth escape at the old bridge of Doon.

It is recorded that the poet looked upon the tale as his *magnum opus*, but with all deference to his fancy, it does not deserve that place. The "Epistle to Davie," the "Cotter's Saturday Night," "Is there for Honest Poverty," and a few other pieces contain deeper thoughts and sterner truths, while the poetic art is as high if not higher; but there will always be difference of opinion as to Burns' masterpiece. The great attraction of Tam o' Shanter is its unbounding humor, its unflagging interest, and its *morale*. To-day we have literary people in abundance—the one regret is that they are not fewer—whose fame, or notoriety, ends at the grave. Every person who has mastered the rudiments of English composition is in a hurry to become famous, and the inevitable result is that few reach the summit of their ambition. An interregnum in connection with this flood of puerilities and inane chatter would be hailed by thoughtful men with tokens of acclamation. Most authors are remembered by one or a few pieces, but this is not the case with Burns. Had Burns written only Tam o' Shanter, he might not have been known beyond the confines of Ayrshire. The piece displays an exceedingly humor-

ous and imaginative mind. It has few appeals to the heart. And, as Burns's place in literature is due to his touching the hearts of his countrymen, our opinion will, we feel assured, find favor with those who have zealously studied the works of our national poet.

Versification in the Scottish dialect is one of the glories of the nation which reared Wallace and Bruce, Knox and Chalmers, Scott and Carlyle; and, towering above them all, Robert Burns. Poetry has always been a vigorous plant in Scotland; every shire has its poet or poets, and this possession has done much to knit Scotsmen together. It is not our intention to pen a eulogy of the poetry of Caledonia. Most Scotsmen are agreed as to the incomparable charm of the native Doric. There is one sign of the times from which Scotsmen should pray to be delivered: it is the delusion that the utilization of the mother tongue, either in speaking or writing, betokens vulgarism. The craving for emulating England will, we fear, unless Scotsmen themselves come to the rescue, gradually wipe the Doric out of existence. Our drawing rooms, our concert halls, our teachers' and guides' institutions breathe an atmosphere distinctly English. Our children when at school write and read in English,

and when at home or on the playground, use the Doric. This is gratifying, but it is not enough, and all school boards and parents would do well to encourage proficiency in home literature. We have made these observations because Tam o' Shanter is excellently adapted for recitation in schools and other places. According to Plato, the Greek Rhapsodist could scarce recite Homer without falling into convulsions; a little girl reads the story of Red Riding Hood with fear and trembling, although she knows it is false; and young and old read the account of Tam o' Shanter's ride (compared with which John Gilpin's was a mere pleasure trot) with joy and pity; moreover, they even cross the Atlantic ocean to scratch their initials on the bridge over which the Kirkoswald farmer rode, because the strength of Burns's imagination triumphs over their plenitude of reason. The poetry of illusion is often the poetry of immortality. Many of the finest thoughts of master minds which have been given to the world have been sandwiched between masses of fiction.

It requires a good deal of application and the possession of histrionic gifts to be able to do justice to Tam o' Shanter. Very few amateur reciters can show the merits of Shakspeare's plays. When the reciter

of Tam o'Shanter requires to be prompted from the front benches; when he goes through the piece without modulating his voice; when he stands immovable like a pyramid of Egypt, the audience is enraged that such exquisite material should be in the hands of such a performer.

The hero of the legend was Douglas Graham, of Shanter farm, near Kirkoswald. Numerous attempts have been made, and are still making, to dispute the authenticity of the statement; but not a particle of proof has been adduced to show that the current record is unreliable. Kirkoswald is an uninviting village situate a few miles from the town of Maybole, the ancient capital of Carrick. It was while residing in this portion of Ayrshire that Burns met with those characters which he subsequently sketched. We have stood by the graves of Tam and the souter (and the churchyard is one of the quaintest in the Burns country); we have examined the Bibles of the souter and the records kept by Hugh Roger, Burns's school-master; we have explored other places and things of interest in the locality, and all this has been done despite the cynical and shallow criticism of those whose bigotry destroys their title to be considered judges in a matter of the kind; but we do not mean to denounce

them, we only pity their narrowness of view. We have yet amongst us individuals who scout the idea of entering the Tam o' Shanter Inn in the High street of Ayr, or going to worship at the shrines of Douglas Graham and John Davidson. The poet's acquaintance with the Kirkoswald worthies has provided more pleasure to Scotsmen than many detractors are aware of. It is not the reading of the tale that has to be considered. The magical influence of association causes thousands to leave their homes to comprehend the situation. And they do not return disappointed. Alloway Kirk and the old bridge of Doon may rank beside Bannockburn and Drumclog, and although the former have become famous through imagination, the latter, although associated with realities, are the less frequented. This may be a reflection on the sound judgment of Scotsmen, but it is none the less true.

The tale, as we have indicated, is a Ben Nevis of Scottish humor on which all eyes are riveted. From the moment Tam mounts his mare at the High street of Ayr, till the interesting spot above the waters of the sparkling Doon is reached, he electrifies the mind of the reader. No devil-ma-care, fashionless, gin-loving farmer ever rode quicker into immortality.

The making of reputations is slow and dreary work, and a reputation that is to last until the final trumpet sound is heard, requires years of plodding; years of bitter regrets; years of joyful experiences. Tam o' Shanter's reputation was bought at a dear price, but the price was not too exacting for the proud position which he occupies to-day. Had Tam been the favorite in the Ayrshire handicap at the Ayr meeting, he could not have ridden faster; still, Maggie was not the mare to put many "ponies" on. Despite the ticklish situations in which Tam is placed, we are compelled to laugh even when we feel inclined to become emotional. We are brought back to the hours of childhood, to the evenings when we sat at the hearth and heard some superstitious old woman recount the cantrips of the witches and other phantoms of romance. Nothing attracts an imaginative person so much as a discourse on the vagaries of the breezy-mannered creatures who dance in the pale moonlight. Tam o' Shanter in the prose of a Macaulay, or a DeQuincey, or a Christopher North, or a Louis Stevenson, would no doubt be an interesting record; but we question if it would live. In the hands of such a person as Burns, it is painted with the brush of a literary Raphael; its fine blending of colors dazzles



the eye and appeals to the understanding, and the older it gets the more attractive does it become. In sketching what we vulgarly term the Deil, Burns displays a rollicking abandon; he talks as if he were entertaining him to haggis at his own fireside. This style would have raised the dander of our covenanting ancestors in the wilds of Ayrshire and Galloway, who could not tolerate indecorum and clowning in religious concerns. At the time in which the poet lived, the hypocritical parson and the indecorous communion were strongly in evidence. And what could be more appropriate at that stage than the feigned cultivation of familiarity with such a one as the Prince of Darkness, in order to show to the ranting theologian that the enemy of mankind was not so black as he was painted. His Deil is the old orthodox one who has done his duty for thousands of years. His witches, too, are wonderful creations—ugly, detestable, with deviltry stamped on every feature of their human forms. We shall not linger over this subject; it is apt to make us think one of the grotesque monsters is seated beneath our writing desk and ready for another sprint along the banks of bonnie Doon. Had the rider failed to reach the keystone of the bridge, the tale would have been spoiled, inasmuch as



the hissing, revengeful, hateful witches would have captured a prize, and their success would have brought witchery as a profession into contempt. Burns, in writing the tale, went as far as he could with safety. He knew what would enthuse his patrons and he succeeded. If Tam's cantrips were not followed with thousands of eyes, millions have pictured the sight in their imagination; they have felt that life has been rendered more pleasant by the setting in circulation of such a piece of legendary history; they have inscribed the story on the tablets of their memories as a possession that shall not fade away. The rich and the poor, the gentle and the simple have bowed before the artist's throne, grateful for the riches bestowed upon them by one whose sublime thoughts have called forth the admiration of the civilized globe. To such a one we must pay homage.

## CAPTAIN GROSE.

FROM "KAY'S EDINBURGH PORTRAITS."

Captain Grose was born in the year 1731, and was the son of Mr. Francis Grose of Richmond, jeweler, who fitted up the coronation crown of George the Second, and died in 1769. By his father he was left an independent fortune. In early life he entered the Surrey militia, of which he became Adjutant and Paymaster; but so careless was he, that he kept no vouchers either of his receipts or expenditures. He used himself to say he had only two books of accounts, viz., the right and left hand pockets. The result may be easily anticipated, and his fortune suffered severely for his folly. His losses on this occasion roused his latent talents; with a good classical education, a fine taste for drawing, encouraged by his friends, and impelled by his situation, he commenced the "Antiquities of England and Wales," the first number of which was published in 1773, and the fourth volume completed in 1776. In 1777 he resumed his pencil, and added two more volumes to his "English

Views," in which he concluded the islands of Guernsey and Jersey, in 237 views, with maps of the counties, besides a general one. The work was reprinted in eight volumes in 1787.

The success of this work induced Grose to illustrate in a similar manner, "The Antiquities of Scotland." This publication, in numbers of four plates each, commenced in the beginning of 1789, and finished in 1791, forming two volumes, with 190 views, and letterpress. Before the plates of the latter numbers were out of the engraver's hands, the author "turned his eyes to Ireland, who seemed to invite him to her hospitable shore, to save from impending oblivion her mouldering monuments, and to unite her, as she should ever be, in closest association with the British Isles. The Captain arrived in Dublin in May, 1791, with the fairest prospect of completing the noblest literary design attempted in this country." Such are the words of Dr. Ledwich, to whom Grose had applied for assistance, and by whom the work was completed, in two volumes, in 1795. But while in Dublin, at the house of Mr. Hone, Grose was suddenly seized with an apoplectic fit, and died in the fifty-second year of his age, upon the 12th of May, 1791. The following epitaph

proposed for him, was inserted in the St. James's Chronicle, May 26th:

Here lies Francis Grose.  
On Thursday, May 12th, 1791,  
Death put an end to  
His views and prospects.

Upon occasion of his marriage. Grose took up his residence in Canterbury, where he remained several years, during which period his wit and vivacity made him many friends. No one possessed more than himself the faculty of setting the table "in a roar," but it was never at the expense of virtue or good manners. He left several sons and daughters; one of the latter married Anketil Singleton, Esq., Lieut.-Governor of Sandguard Fort. His son, Daniel Grose, F.A.S., Captain of the Royal Regiment of Artillery, was, after several campaigns in America, appointed Deputy-Governor of the new settlement at Botany Bay, in 1790.

Besides the works above noticed, he published a Treatise on Ancient Armor and Weapons: illustrated by plates taken from the original armor in the Tower of London, and other arsenals, museums, and cabinets." London, 1785. Quarto. A supplement was added in 1789. "A Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue."

London, 1785. Octavo. "A guide to Health, Wealth, Honor, and Riches." London, 1785. Octavo. This is a most amusing collection of advertisements, principally illustrative of the extreme gullability of the citizens of London. A very humorous introduction is prefixed. "Military Antiquities, respecting a history of the English Army, from the Conquest to the present time." Two volumes. London, 1786-88. Quarto. With numerous plates. This work was published in numbers. "The History of Dover Castle. By the Rev. William Darrell, Chaplain to Queen Elizabeth." 1781. In Quarto, the same as the large and small editions of the antiquities of England and Wales;" with ten views engraved from drawings by Captain Grose. "A Provincial Glossary; with a Collection of Local Proverbs and Popular Superstitions." London, 1788. Octavo. "Rules for Drawing Caricatures; the subject illustrated with four copper plates; with an essay on comic painting." London, 1788. Octavo. A second edition appeared in 1791, Octavo, illustrated with twenty-one copper plates, seventeen of which were etched by Captain Grose. After his demise was published "The Olio;" being a collection of Essays, Dialogues, Letters, Biographical Sketches, etc. By the late Francis

Grose, Esq., F. R. S. and A. S. ; with a portrait of the author. London, 1796. Octavo.

There are dissertations by him in the "Archæologia," the one "On an Ancient Fortification at Christchurch, Hants," and the other "On Ancient Spurs."

## CAPTAIN GROSE.

FROM CUNNINGHAM'S "LIFE AND LAND OF BURNS."

"It's tauld he was a sodger bred,  
And ane wad rather fa'n than fled,  
But now he's quat the spurtle blade,  
And dog-skin wallet,  
And ta'en the—Antiquarian trade  
I think they call it.

Burns met Francis Grose at the Friar's Carse, on the banks of the Nith, the residence of a brother antiquarian, Mr. Riddle, and was pleased with his manners and his wit, and listened alike to his Southland jokes and his old-world lore. It is said nevertheless, that though they were brothers in humor and in the social cup, the haughty Englishman disliked the Scot's sallies about the rotundity of his person, and was mortified rather than pleased when he found himself described as a "fine, fat fudgy wight," small of stature though bright in genius. It is likely that the poet was not ignorant of this; and hence his jocular epigram, in which he represents Satan as eager for the soul of the antiquary, but dreading to encounter the immense load with which he heard his sick bed

creaking and groaning. Indeed, he seldom omitted an opportunity of having a fling at him; even in the envelope which enclosed the inimitable Tam o' Shanter to Cardonnel, another of the northern antiquaries, he makes sarcastic inquiries.

“ Ken ye ought o' Captain Grose?  
If he's amang his friends or foes?  
Is he south or is he north?  
Or drowned in the River Forth?  
Is he slain by Highland bodies?  
And eaten like a wether haggis?”

The poet soon, indeed, discovered that Grose had but little in common with himself; he was a dry-as-dust antiquary, and thought the bard received immortal honor in admitting his tale of Tam o' Shanter as an illustration to the ruins of Alloway Kirk. On the other hand, Burns imagined that he helped Grose largely with his task when he advertised his professional visit to the ruined castles and abbeys in Scotland; and no doubt his humorous epistle to his countrymen prepared the way both for Grose and his work on the Scottish antiquities. In the commencement of this poem, he alarms the National pride:

“ Hear, land o' cakes, and brither Scots,  
Frae Maiden Kirk to Johnny Groat's:  
If there's a hole in a' your coats,  
I rede you tent it.  
A chield's amang ye takin' notes,  
An' faith he'll prent it.



In the second and third verses he introduces the Captain to his countrymen, and claims their regard to his personal appearance as well as to his learned qualities:

“If in your bounds ye chance to light  
Upon a fine, fat fodge! wight,  
O' stature short, but genius bright,  
That's he, mark weel—  
And wow! he has an unco slight  
O cauk and keel.

By some auld, houlet-haunted biggin,  
Or kirk deserted by its riggin;  
It's ten to ane ye'll find him snug in  
Some eldrich part,  
Wi' deils, they say—Lord save's!—colleaguin,  
At some black art.”

He then calls on those who deal in spells and glamour, and on the spirits which haunt ruined halls, to tremble and quake at the coming of one who can let daylight in upon their dark doings, and expose and expel them. His account of the antiquarian collection of his friend is in a happy style. Sir Walter Scott, as he conducted a friend of ours through his splendid armory leaned kindly on his shoulder and repeated with great unction the following verse:

“He has a fouth o' auld nick-nackets:  
Rusty airn caps and jinglin' jackets,  
Wad haud the Lothians three in tackets,  
A towmont guid;  
And parritch-pats, and auld saut-buckets  
Before the flood.”

Grose was a man of perseverance and research; his work on the military antiquities of Britain will long be a monument to the honor of single-handed enterprise. A work so extensive and minute, so curious and instructive, so worthy of the nation and its history, was to have been looked for from the crown or the government, rather than a half-pay captain and an antiquary, rich in nick-nackets, rather than in gold. He was born at Richmond, in the year 1731, where his father was a jeweler; he was for some time in the Herald's College; served a few years in the militia and the cavalry; and, quitting knapsack and sword, distinguished himself as an antiquary; and died suddenly at a dinner-table in Dublin in the year 1791.

## CAPTAIN GROSE, THE ANTI- QUARY.

FROM ECHO.

On May 12, 1791, died the once-famous Francis Grose, antiquary, artist, and humorist—a man whose name is unknown, but who lives in the poetry of his friend Burns, and in the antiquarian literature of these islands. He was born in 1731, at Greenford, Middlesex, and was the son of Francis Grose, a native of Berne, who came to England in the eighteenth century, and settled at Richmond, Surrey. He received a classical education, and he studied art in Shipley's drawing-school. As early as 1766 he became a member of the Incorporated Society of British Artists, and in 1768 he exhibited a drawing, "High Life Below Stairs." In the next year he exhibited architectural drawings in the Royal Academy.

About this time Grose held the office of Richmond Herald, and subsequently he was Adjutant and Paymaster of the Hampshire Militia. His system of keeping the regimental accounts was an original one—

he put all receipts into one pocket and made all his payments from another—and this soon landed him in confusion and difficulty. He adopted the same system when, in 1778, he was made Adjutant and Captain of the First Surrey or the Tangier Regiment. In his own money matters he was equally careless, and the fortune which his father left him soon vanished.

In 1773 appeared the first volume of the work on which his chief fame rests—"The Antiquities of England and Wales." This was completed in four volumes, in 1787, and still remains a standard work. The drawings were made by himself, but he had assistance in writing the descriptions. This work completed, he visited Scotland, where at Friar's Carse he made the acquaintance of Robert Burns, and the two soon became cronies. Grose was immensely corpulent, as his portrait shows, "full of good-humor and good-nature and an inimitable boon companion;" and in Burns he found a kindred spirit, who, however, did not scruple to satirize his friend. To Grose the poet addressed the well-known poem which begins

"Hear, land o' cakes and brither Scots."

The second verse describes the captain's personal appearance and his skill with the pencil.

Burns gave serious offence to the worthy antiquary by another poem, beginning

“Ken ye ought of Captain Grose?”

In the introduction to the “Antiquities of Scotland” Grose says that Burns made out what was most worthy of notice in Ayrshire, and also wrote specially for him, in connection with Alloway Kirk, “Tam o' Shan-ter,” one of the most popular of the poet's works. (See Burns's general correspondence, letter 227).

The “Antiquities of Scotland” were published in 1789-'91. Then the author visited the sister isle; but alas! his work here was soon cut short. He had not written and printed more than seven pages of his “Antiquities of Ireland,” when he died of apoplexy in Dublin. His remains lie in Drumcondra Church.

# AULD KIRK ALLOWAY.

BY DR. BENJAMIN F. LEGGETT.

Oh, Alloway! Oh, Alloway!  
Thy roofless walls are fair to day!  
Above thee azure skies are spread,  
Around thee sleep the silent dead;  
By lichen'd stone and leaning slate,  
My eager footsteps pause and wait,  
While soft June airs around thee play,  
Auld haunted Kirk o' Alloway!

A dusty pilgrim at thy shrine,  
Oh, Alloway! what rest is mine!  
Within the grateful shade I lie,  
Beneath the broad leaf-fretted sky,  
Safe sheltered from the noonday gleam,  
What airy shadows haunt my dream;  
What gray wraiths out of mist-land stray,  
And throng thee round, Auld Alloway!

The daisied turf is sweet to-day,  
Around thy walls, Oh, Alloway!  
The minstrel's song hath lent its charm,  
And time can never do thee harm;  
Though years go by, and, safe below,  
Tam sleeps beneath the hawthorn's snow,  
Yet still thy world-wide fame will stay,  
Witch-haunted Kirk o' Alloway!

## A BRIEF REVIEW.

BY ALLAN CUNNINGHAM.

Burns had become fully reconciled to Nithsdale, and was on the most intimate terms with the muse when he produced *Tam o' Shanter*, the crowning glory of all his poems. For this marvelous tale we are indebted to something like accident. Francis Grose, the antiquary, happened to visit *Friar's Carse*, and as he loved wine and wit, the total want of imagination was no hindrance to his friendly intercourse with the poet. "*Alloway's auld haunted Kirk*," was mentioned, and Grose said he would include it in his illustrations of the antiquities of Scotland, if the bard of Doon would write a poem to accompany it. Burns consented, and before he left the table the various traditions, which belonged to the ruin, were passing through his mind. One of these was of a farmer, who, on a night wild with wind and rain on passing the old Kirk was startled by a light glimmering inside the walls. On drawing near he saw a caldron hung



over a fire, in which the heads and limbs of children were swimming. There were neither witch nor friend to guard it, so he unhooked the caldron, and turned out the contents and carried it home as a trophy. A second tradition was of a man of Kyle, who, having been on a market night detained late in Ayr, on crossing the old bridge of Doon, on his way home, saw a light streaming through the Gothic window of Alloway Kirk, and on riding near, beheld a batch of the district witches dancing merrily round their master, the devil, who kept them "loupin an' flingin'" to the sound of a pagpipe. He knew several of the old crones, and smiled at their gambols, for they were dancing in their smocks; but one of them, who happened to be young and rosy, had on a shorter smock than those of her companions by two spans at least, which so moved the farmer, that he exclaimed "Weel luppen, Maggie wi' the short sark!" Satan stopped his music, the light was extinguished, and out rushed the hags after the farmer, who made at the gallop for the bridge of Doon, knowing that they could not cross a stream. He escaped; but Maggie, who was foremost, seized the horse's tail at the middle of the bridge, and pulled it off, in her efforts to stay him.

The poem was the work of a single day. Burns

walked out to his favorite musing path, which runs towards the old tower of the Isle, along Nithside, and was observed to walk hastily and mutter as he went. His wife knew by these signs that he was engaged in composition, and watched him from the window; at last, wearying and moreover wondering at the unusual length of his meditations, she took her children with her and went to meet him; but as he seemed not to notice her she stepped aside among the broom to allow him to pass, which he did with a flushed brow, and dropping eyes, reciting these lines aloud:

“Now Tam, O Tam! had thae been queans,  
A' plump and strapping in their teens!  
Their sarks, instead o' creeshie flannen,  
Been snaw-white seventeen hundred linnen!  
Thir breeks o' mine, my only pair,  
That ance were plush, o' gude blue hair,  
I wad ha gi'en them off my hurdies,  
For ae blink o' the bonnie burdies!”

He embellished this wild tradition from fact as well as from fancy. Along the road which Tam came on that eventful night, his memory supplied circumstances, which prepared him for the strange sight at the Kirk of Alloway. A poor chapman had perished some winters before in the snow; a murdered child had been found by some early hunters; a tippling farmer had fallen from his horse at the expense of his neck, beside a “meikle stane”; and a melancholy

old woman had hanged herself at the bush aboon the well, as the poem relates. All these matters the poet pressed into the service of the muse, and used them with a skill which adorns rather than oppresses the legend. A pert lawyer from Dumfries objected to the language as obscure. "Obscure, sir!" said Burns; "you know not the language of that great master of your own art—the devil. If you had a witch for your client you would not be able to manage her defence."

## THE GALLOWAY CUTTY-SARK.

BY JOHN GIBSON LOCKHART.

Grose and Burns had too much in common not to become great friends. The poet's accurate knowledge of Scottish phraseology and customs was of much use to the researches of the humorous antiquarian; and, above all, it is to their acquaintance that we owe "Tam o' Shanter." Burns told the story as he had heard it in Ayrshire, in a letter to the Captain, and was easily persuaded to versify it. The poem is said to have been the work of one day; and Mrs. Burns well remembered the circumstances.

To the last, Burns was of opinion that "Tam o' Shanter" was the best of his productions; and although it does not often happen that poet and public come to the same conclusion on such points, I believe the decision in question has been all but unanimously approved of.

The admirable execution of the piece, so far as it goes, leaves nothing to wish for; the only criticism has been, that the catastrophe appears unworthy of

the preparation. Burns might have avoided this error—if error it be—had he followed not the Ayrshire but the Galloway edition of the legend. According to that tradition, the Cutty-Sark, who attracted the special notice of the bold intruder of the Satanic ceremonial, was no other than the pretty wife of a farmer, residing in the same village with himself, and of whose unholy propensities no suspicion had ever been whispered. The Galloway Tam, being thoroughly sobered by terror, crept to his bed, the moment he reached home after his escape, and said nothing of what had happened to any of his family. He was awakened in the morning with the astounding intelligence that his horse had been found dead in the stable, with a woman's hand, clotted with blood, adhering to the tail. Presently it was reported that Cutty-Sark had burned her hand grievously over night, and was ill in bed, but obstinately refused to let her hand be examined by the village leech. Thereupon Tam, disentangling the bloody hand from the hair of his defunct favorite's tail, proceeded to the residence of the fair witch, and forcibly pulling her stump to view, showed his trophy, and narrated the whole circumstances of the adventure. The poor victim of the black art was constrained to confess her guilty prac-

tices in presence of the priest and the laird, and was forthwith burnt alive under their joint auspices, within water-mark, on the Solway Firth.

Such, Mr. Cunningham informs me, is the version of this story, current in Galloway and Dumfriesshire; but it may be doubted whether even if Burns was acquainted with it, he did not choose wisely in adhering to the Ayrshire legend, as he had heard it in his youth. It is seldom that tales of popular superstition are effective in proportion to their completeness of solution and catastrophe. On the contrary, they, like the creed to which they belong, suffer little in a picturesque point of view by exhibiting a maimed and fragmentary character, that in nowise satisfies strict taste, either critical or moral. Dreams based in darkness may fitly terminate in a blank; the cloud opens, and the cloud closes. The absence of definite scope and purpose appears to be of the essence of the mythological grotesque. Burns lays the scene of this remarkable performance almost on the spot where he was born; and all the terrific circumstances by which he has marked the progress of Tam's midnight journey, are drawn from local tradition:

“ By this time he was cross the ford  
Whare in the snaw the chapman smoor'd,  
And past the birks and meikle stane,

Whare drunken Chairlie brak's neck-bane,  
And thro' the whins, and by the cairn,  
Whare hunters fand the murder'd bairn;  
And near the thorn, aboon the well,  
Whare Mungo's mither hanged hersel'."

None of these tragic memoranda were derived from imagination. Nor was "Tam o' Shanter" himself an imaginary character. Shanter is a farm close to Kirkoswald, that smuggling village in which Burns, when sixteen years old, studied mensuration, and "first became acquainted with scenes of swaggering riot." The then occupier of Shanter, by name Douglas Graham, was, by all accounts, equally what the Tam of the poet appears—a jolly, careless rustic, who took much more interest in the contraband traffic of the coast, than the rotation of crops. Burns knew the man well; and to his dying day Graham, nothing loath, passed among his rural compeers by the name of Tam o' Shanter.

## WHY "TAM" WAS WRITTEN.

BY PROFESSOR JOHN STUART BLACKIE.

In the year 1790 the distinguished English antiquary, Captain Francis Grose, paid a visit to Scotland, and was entertained with his usual hospitality by Captain Riddell. Here, of course, he was introduced to the farmer of Ellisland; and in their convivial qualities and good-humor, the poet and the antiquarian straightway recognized one another as brothers. In the course of their confabulations Burns took the opportunity of suggesting to the archæologist that there was a fine old ruined church at Alloway, on the banks of the Doon, a region to which the poet owed his birth, and where his father had found a burial ground; and which was moreover, the traditional scene of strange witch and worlock stories, than which few things could be more interesting to a genial antiquary like Grose. The Captain at once took the hint, and promised to give special prominence to Alloway Kirk in his book, if Burns would furnish a witch story to give a rich seasoning to the pudding.



The poet's love of frolic, and his deep-rooted patriotism, at once jumped at the proposal. A bargain was made, and the muse of Coila, in one of her most fervid moments, visited the bard one forenoon as he was pacing up and down his favorite walk on the banks of the Nith, and before evening the great masterpiece of Scottish character, Scottish humor, Scottish witch-lore, and Scottish imagination, "Tam o' Shanter," was produced at full length, glowing from the anvil. Besides the glory of having accidentally been the cause of the production of this excellent witch-idyl, the Middlesex antiquary had the good fortune to elicit from the poet a personal description of himself, which will do more to make him immortal than all his antiquarian works put together.

## THE MATCHLESS TALE.

BY PRINCIPAL SHAIRP.

But what had Burns been doing for the last year in poetic production? In this respect the whole interval between the composition of the lines "To Mary in Heaven," in October, 1789, and the autumn of the succeeding year, is almost a blank. Three electioneering ballads, besides a few trivial pieces, make up the whole. There is not a line written by him during this year which, if it were deleted from his works, would any way impair his poetic fame. But this long barrenness was atoned for by a burst of inspiration which came on him in the fall of 1790, and struck off at one heat the matchless tale of "Tam o' Shanter." It was to the meeting already noticed of Burns with Captain Grose, the antiquary, at Friar's Carse, that we owe this wonderful poem. The poet and the antiquary suited each other exactly, and they soon became

"Unco pack and thick thegither."

Burns asked his friend, when he reached Ayrshire, to make a drawing of Alloway Kirk, and include it in

his sketches, for it was dear to him because it was the resting-place of his father, and there he himself might some day lay his bones. To induce Grose to do this, Burns told him that Alloway Kirk was the scene of many witch stories and weird sights. The antiquary replied, "Write you a poem on the scene, and I'll put in the verses with an engraving of the ruin." Burns having found a fitting day and hour, when "his barmy noddle was working prime," walked out to his favorite path down the western bank of the river.

The poem was the work of one day, of which Mrs. Burns retained a vivid recollection. Her husband had spent most of the day by the river side, and in the afternoon she joined him with her two children. He was busily engaged "crooning to himsel"; and Mrs. Burns, perceiving that her presence was an interruption, loitered behind with her little ones among the broom. Her attention was presently attracted by the strange and wild gesticulations of the bard, who was now seen at some distance, agonized with an ungovernable access of joy. He was reciting very loud, and with tears rolling down his cheeks, those animated verses which he had just conceived:

"Now Tam, O Tam! had thae been queans,  
A' plump and strappin' in their teens."

"I wish ye had seen him," said his wife; "he was in such ecstasy that the tears were happing down his cheeks." These last words are given by Allan Cunningham, in addition to the above account, which Lockhart got from a manuscript journal of Cromek. The poet having committed the verses to writing on the top of his sod-dyke above the water, came into the house, and read them immediately in high triumph at the fireside.

Thus in the case of two of Burns's best poems, we have an account of the bard as he appeared in his hour of inspiration, not to any literary friend bent on pictorial effect, but from the plain narrative of his simple and admiring wife. Burns speaks of "Tam o' Shanter" as his first attempt at a tale in verse—unfortunately it was also his last. He himself regarded it as the masterpiece of all his poems, and posterity has not, I believe, reversed the judgment.

In this, one of his happiest flights, Burns's imagination bore him from the vale of Nith back to the banks of Doon, and to the weird tales he had there heard in childhood, told by the winter firesides. The characters of the poem have been identified; that of Tam is taken from a farmer, Douglas Graham, who lived at the farm of Shanter, in the parish of Kirkoswald. He

had a scolding wife, called Helen McTaggart, and the tombstones of both are pointed out in Kirkoswald kirkyard. Souter Johnnie is more uncertain, but is supposed, with some probability, to have been John Davidson, a shoemaker, who lies buried in the same place. Yet, from Burns's poem we would gather that this latter lived in Ayr. But these things matter little. From his experience of the smuggling farmers of Kirkoswald, among whom "he first became acquainted with scenes of swaggering and riot," and his remembrance of the tales that haunted the spot where he passed his childhood, combined with his knowledge of the peasantry, their habits and superstitions, Burns's imagination wove the inimitable tale.

## “TAM O’ SHANTER” IN A DRESS SUIT.

BY ROBERT FORD.

We are living in an age of daring and adventurous women; viz., the divided skirt, the lady-doctor, the female politician, the she football player, and many more recent innovations which these will at once suggest, the very mildest of which would have caused our revered grannies, and grandfathers as well, to hold up their hands in pious horror. And not the least courageous, surely, of the modern dames with pluck and courage is Miss Isabella K. Gough. Whence this lady?—who was her father, who was her mother, who is her sister, who is her brother?—we have not the remotest idea. Besides, it is Miss Gough’s action, and not herself, that interests us meantime. What has she done? Nothing base, nothing demanding police investigation, let me answer at once. The lady’s intentions have been quite honorable and above suspicion. She has offended unwittingly, only, by attempting the impossible. She has tried to put “Tam

o' Shanter " into a dress suit! To abandon metaphor, and speak in plain terms, she has attempted a translation of Burns's immortal poem into modern English; and who that knows the rugged native grandeur of the original will not guess the result! Why, it is the funniest little book of the season; Mark Twain has produced nothing so entertaining these last ten years. A friend sent me a copy with his New-Year's-Day greetings, and I have not been greeting, but laughing almost every hour since it arrived. Translations of Burns's poems and songs are not new to me, and I have learned by experience how to take the fun out of them, and grow fat on it. They are delightfully amusing and stimulating at all times. The less successful as translations, the more entertaining as literature. Only a year ago Alexander Corbett, of Boston, Mass., U. S., sent us over his "Select Poems of Burns, Translated into English," which was value for any measure of quinine and iron tonic. In Mr. Corbett's well-intentioned work, instead of "Whistle o'er the lave o't," the reader was enjoined to "Whistle the remainder." A wise counsel, if this had been the first poem in the book, and the translator had taken the advice to himself. But it was otherwise. He did not see the fun he was making, and gave us more such,

both fore and aft. The "blast o' Janwar' win'," which stimulates the early part of "There was a Lad," he modified into "A gleam of wintry sun," and good old "John Anderson, My Jo," was rouged and set out in this fashion:—

"John Anderson, my jo, John,  
When we were newly wed,  
Your hair was like the raven,  
Your cheeks were round and red."

Not Mr. Corbett, of Boston, but another—a Frenchman—a year or two ago made efforts in a similar way, and "Willie Brewed a Peck o' Maut," when retranslated literally into English, read as follows:—

"Oh, Willie has brewed a peck of malt  
And Rob and Allan came to sample it.  
During all that night three hearts more joyous  
You would not have found in Christianity.  
We were not very drunk, we were not very drunk;  
We had just a little drop in the eye;  
The cock can sing, the day show itself,  
But we will taste the liquor of barley."

Nobody may expect anything more grotesque than that outside of a Christmas pantomime, except perhaps in the writings of the one and only M'Gonnigall, or in Miss Isabella K. Gough's translation of "Tam o' Shanter." This is included in a beautifully got-up little book of sixty odd pages, issued by Messrs. David Bryce & Son, Glasgow, having eight clever illustrations by Mr. Thomas Faed, the celebrated Galloway



artist, and with a reduced facsimile of the poet's (I mean Burns's) original MS. of the poem reproduced on each alternate page—Scotch and English in juxtaposition. It is a marvel. Let us quote the first opening lines:—

“ When pedlar fellows cease to cry their wares,  
 And thirsty neighbors meet to drown their cares,  
 When drawing to a close is market day,  
 And country folks begin to take the way;  
 While at the foaming cup we sit and quaff,  
 Primed by the ale at every jest to laugh,  
 We think not of the weary, long Scots miles,  
 The marshes, waters, frequent gaps and stiles  
 That lie between us and our distant homes.  
 Where sullen, sulky, knowing why we roam,  
 Sits our good dame, with brows like gath'ring storm,  
 Nursing her rising wrath to keep it warm.  
 This painful truth found honest Tam o' Shanter,  
 As he from Ayr one market night did canter.  
 (No other town has yet surpassed old Ayr  
 For gallant, honest men and maidens fair). ”

Than these last two lines in contrast with—

“Auld Ayr, wham ne'er a town surpasses  
 For honest men and bonnie lasses,

nothing more eloquent and convincing could be advanced—were it necessary—to demonstrate to any one, either the weakness of the English language in comparison with the Scotch, or the utter inadequacy of the former tongue as a medium through which to express the latter. “Tam o' Shanter” in a dress suit, forsooth! Had Miss Gough been gifted with even a

very mild sense of humor she would have tumbled off in a fit of laughter at the penultimate line there and persevered no further. But thanks to the amiable lady's sublime dulness in respect to a joke she plods perseveringly to the bitter end, and we have the reward. Only one morsel more of her translation here, however, and take it slow, please—with water:

“Now, Tam, O Tam! had these been damsels fair,  
Rosy and strapping, that were dancing there,  
Instead of flannels, grimy, greasy, black,  
Fine snow-white linen would have graced each back!  
These, my knee-breeches, though my only pair,  
That once were velvet plush, of good blue hair,  
I would have gladly given them off my haunches  
Even for one glimpse of those seductive wenches.  
But withered beldams, ugly, old, and droll,  
True gallows hags, whose looks would wean a foal,  
Leaping and flinging, clinging to a stick,  
I wonder did not turn thy stomach sick.”

It may be that Miss Isabella K. Gough will not secure immortal fame as a translator of Burns into English. But when she produces anything again one-half as funny as “Tam o’ Shanter” in a dress suit, it is my earnest cry and prayer that I shall not miss seeing it.

## BURNS'S MASTERPIECE.

BY GEORGE SAVAGE, OF BALTIMORE, MARYLAND.

The ability and versatility of Robert Burns as a poet are strikingly shown in "Tam o' Shanter," and even Shakspeare does not surpass him in power to present gay scenes and then the weird, the mysterious, and the supernatural. The author of so many joyous songs and of the "Cotter's Saturday Night"—so impressive in its religious tone and the glowing picture it gives of domestic life and fireside happiness—appears in "Tam o' Shanter" in a new light. Mr. Lockhart's statement (doubtless true) that "the poem was the work of one day" seems almost incredible when we consider its length, scope, and merits. "Tam o' Shanter" will ever be among the living characters depicted by Burns. The poem deals so graphically with a subject peculiarly fascinating to almost every mind that it will always awaken special interest. It is indeed simply natural to enter into "Tam o' Shanter's" joys, to go with him on his perilous ride on that ever-memorable night and to feel for him and "noble

Maggie" in the trying experiences which awaited them.

"Tam o' Shanter" is a fine example of sustained strength, and of exceptional descriptive powers. The poet fully prepares us for the changes of scene and action which Tam and his gray mare experienced. The opening stanzas contain words of prophecy and warning, show us Tam in his most convivial mood and happy in the congenial and seductive companionship of Souter Johnny, "his ancient, trusty, drouthy crony," and Burns completes the picture in four admirable lines:—

"As bees flee hame wi' lades o' treasure,  
The minutes wing'd their way wi' pleasure:  
Kings may be blest, but Tam was glorious  
O'er a' the ills of life victorious!"

The soliloquy which follows is unsurpassed and may well be repeated here:

"But pleasures are like poppies spread,  
You seize the flower, its bloom is shed;  
Or like the snowfall in the river,  
A moment white—then melts forever;  
Or like the borealis race,  
That flit ere you can point their place;  
Or like the rainbow's lovely form,  
Evanishing amid the storm."

The poet then ushers Tam into the darkness of midnight and makes him the plaything of the angry

elements. From the hour Tam was weel mounted on his gray mare, Meg, to the end of the composition Burns carries us forward with an irresistible impulse; and at the close we remember Tam and his faithful mare with lively thoughts of "the hellish legion" which pursued them.

"Tam o' Shanter" affords ample proof of the genius, imagination, and poetic talents of Robert Burns and deservedly ranks among the best poems of its kind in the whole range of literature.

## AT ALLOWAY.

BY DR. BENJAMIN F. LEGGETT.

Foot sore and weary by thy roofless walls,  
While folded shadows sweet with meadow bloom  
Wave airy hands across each lichen'd tomb,  
What peace and rest upon the pilgrim falls!  
From shaded haunts the tender mavis calls,  
Far off the hills in summer beauty loom,  
And near the daisies print the turf with bloom;  
While every scene the eager soul enthralls:  
  
A mellow song breathes through the tasseled pine,  
The open windows seem again to glow,  
With gruesome lights the hollow walls to shine,  
While airy shadows waver to and fro—  
Is this a dream amid the drowsy noon?  
Or whence those hoof-beats from the Brig o' Doon?

## NOTES ON TAM O'SHANTER.

BY JOHN MUIR, F. S. A. SCOT.

Douglas Graham, of Shanter, a farm on the Kirkoswald coast, in Ayrshire, has been so long associated in the public mind as the original of Burns's equestrian hero in the most wonderful ride in modern poetry that it is hardly worth while to bring forward another claimant with any great hope of having his claims recognized or even considered. Occasionally, in the correspondence of the daily newspapers, abortive efforts are made to unsaddle Tam in order that Maggie may gallop through the Elysian fields of poesy with the rightful rider on her back. One Thomas Reid is well known to the curious in such matters as a claimant for the honor of having been the prototype of the hero of Burns's inimitable tale. But Thomas, although his case is strongly supported by testimonials as to his bibulous habits, has not been successful in winning the sympathy of the public, a misfortune upon which Thomas may be said to look with indifference *now*, however much it may have concerned him

while alive; for, as his supply of usquebaugh depended on the security of his reputation as the indubitable Tam, we may rest assured that the goodman was not indifferent to his claims to a distinction with which his whole life was bound up, and which ultimately caused his end. As I am responsible for having brought forward Reid, I may as well quote the obituary notice from the *Scots Magazine* for 1823, which caused the controversy on the subject when I innocently printed the following in a Glasgow newspaper:

August 9, 1823.—At Lochwinnoch, Thomas Reid, laborer. He was born 21st October, 1745, in the clachan [*sic*] of Kyle, Ayrshire. The importance attached to this circumstance arises from his being the celebrated equestrian hero of Burns's poem, "Tam o' Shanter." He has at length surmounted the "mosses, waters, slaps, and stiles" of life. For a considerable time by-past he has been in the service of Major Harvey, of Castle Semple, nine months of which he has been incapable of labor, and to the honor of Mr. Harvey, be it named, he has, with a fostering and laudable generosity, soothed, as far as was in his power, the many ills of age and disease. He, however, still retained the desire of being "fu' for weeks the-gither."

Possibly few of my readers have ever heard of Tam Skelpit, another claimant. We ourselves only made the acquaintance of Mr. Skelpit some few years ago. This gentleman is under the disadvantage of having been born at some place considerably south of the



Tweed. Our own impression is that he is a Londoner, pure and simple; and may, as a boy, have carried crumpets and muffins to Samuel Pickwick, Esq., or even have acted as stable hand to Mr. Weller, Sr., but he certainly never "rode the gray mare Meg." He was first introduced to the reading public by a London publisher who caters for those whose bibliomania takes the form of a passion for cheap paper-cover editions of the classics. We quote the following lines, in which Tam is described as careering on his mad journey:

Tam Skelpit on thro' dub and mire,  
Despising wind and rain and fire;  
Whiles holding fast his gude blue bonnet,  
Whiles crooning o'er some auld Scots sonnet.

With reference to the obituary notice quoted from the *Scots Magazine*, and reprinted by me in the *Glasgow Herald*, the following interesting letter from James W. Shand-Harvey, Esq., of Castle Semple, Lochwinnoch, appeared:

My attention has been called to letters which have recently appeared in your columns (on the 7th and 9th ult.) with regard to this worthy. Two obituary notices have been referred to by your correspondents, one taken from a volume of the *Scots Magazine* of 1823, and the other from the *Glasgow Courier* of 19th August of the same year. They show that Thomas Reid, laborer, died at Lochwinnoch on the 9th August, 1823. Attention is called to this occurrence, because

he was the famous "Tam o' Shanter." I have found a similar announcement in *Blackwood's Magazine* for September, 1823, Vol. XIV., page 375. It runs as follows:

"Died, at Lochwinnoch, 9th August, 1823, Thomas Reid, laborer. He was born on the 21st October, 1745, in the clachan of Kyle, Ayrshire. The importance attached to this circumstance arises from his being the celebrated equestrian hero of Burns's poem "Tam o' Shanter." He has at length surmounted the 'mosses, waters, slaps, and stiles' of life. For a considerable time by-past he has been in the service of Major Harvey, of Castle Semple, nine months of which he has been incapable of labor. He, however, still retained the desire of being 'fu' for weeks thegither'."

It is worthy of remark that there is no hesitation or doubt expressed in these three notices with regard to this individual being the real prototype of "Tam o' Shanter." Another curious point is they all make mention of the "clachan of Kyle." What do these words signify? Clachan, as is well known, means a small village in which there is a parish church; elsewhere it is called kirk-town. It is derived from Gael, *clachan*, a circle of stones, as churches were erected in the same places which in times of heathenism had been consecrated for Druidical worship. Kyle, with Carrick and Cunninghame, were the three ancient divisions of Ayrshire.

"Kyle for a man,  
Carrick for a coo,  
Cunninghame for butter and cheese,  
And Galloway for woo."

It would appear as if a mistake had been made with regard to the birthplace of Thomas Reid, but it looks such a curious and incomprehensible error that it is difficult to understand how it could have been allowed to pass unnoticed in the pages of *Blackwood*, the *Scots Magazine*, and the *Glasgow Courier*. In the preface of the second edition (1858) of a little pamphlet entitled "The Real Souter Johnny," a poem by the late

Mr. Porteous, Maybole, printed by Hugh Henry, Ayr, it is stated that the heroic Tam was Douglas Graham "without controversy." Evidently the writer must have been unaware of the notices already referred to. It would be interesting to ascertain if they have ever been challenged in the pages of the publications in which they appeared, or elsewhere. Perhaps some of your numerous readers who take an interest in Burnsiana will make inquiry as to this; for it would be passing strange, indeed, if it turned out they had never been taken notice of till your correspondent, Mr. John Muir, set the ball arolling.

In support of the view that Thomas Reid might have been the real "Shanter," I would mention that I have before me as I write a pony's hoof made into a snuff-box. It is shod with a band of iron. On the iron is engraved—"Shoe made from Tam o' Shanter's knife." On the silver mountings of the lid is the following:

"For ev'ry hoof he ca'd a shoe on,  
The smith and Tam got rantin' fu' on.  
J. R. LEE-HARVEY, Castle Semple, July, 1824."

I have always understood that the hoof was that of a favorite pony which had belonged to one of my predecessors, J. R. Lee-Harvey. The knife with which it was shod was given to him, when quite a small boy, by Thomas Reid, who was then working here as a laborer, and considered at that time by many to be the real "Tam." I hardly think Colonel Harvey would have allowed the shoe to be engraved and nailed on the hoof unless there had been reasonable ground for believing that Thomas Reid was the "Shanter." My grieve John Nelson tells me that he remembers his father, who was here in the same position before him, saying that Thomas Reid was the real "Tam," that he was a tall, thin man, and worked here as a hedger, and John Nelson can point out the hedges which he was told by his father had been planted by Thomas Reid. His great expression to

show his pleasure with anything was to say it was glorious, and he was notorious as being a confirmed tippler.

I am, of course, aware that in the various editions of Burns's poems Douglas Graham is referred to as the original "Tam o' Shanter;" but it is quite possible that Thomas Reid might have been a laborer on the farm of Shanter when the poem was written, which was, I think, about 1790. It might have been that Burns did not like to call attention to Douglas Graham in too direct a fashion; or perhaps for rhythmic purposes the laborer's name suited his muse better than that of the farmer, so he adopted "Tam" as the name of the hero of his celebrated poem.

From what I have been able to gather from several old people about here, I think it is clear that Thomas Reid came originally from Shanter, or its neighborhood. Admitting for argument's sake that he was not the real "Tam," it is quite possible that after the absorption of much whiskey he brought himself and others to believe that he was that individual. I hope some of your readers will be able to throw some light on this point; but I think it will be difficult to prove that the paragraphs in *Blackwood*, the *Scots Magazine*, and the *Glasgow Courier* were correct, and that the mortal remains of the celebrated "Tam" lie buried in the old churchyard at Lochwinnoch.

JAMES W. SHAND-HARVEY.

I find in an old note-book of mine this information about "Souter Johnny": "One John Lauchlan, a shoemaker in Ayr, was the person destined by Burns to immortal remembrance as Souter Johnny. He died in 1819 and was buried in Alloway kirkyard, about three miles from Ayr, and was laid a few graves from that of the venerable father of the poet. When the weight of years deprived him of the resources of in-

dustry, having no relatives in a position to provide a home and pillow of ease for the decline of his life, he retired to a charitable institution. There, however, he only slept. The kindness of many friends supplied him with all the other comforts he required, and his son, now grown up, would have taken him to his home, but he was contented as he was, and knew that his 'auld banes' would soon be removed where they would give no pain to himself, nor trouble to his friends." In *Blackwood* for the month of November, 1823, I find the following obituary notices connected with the name of Burns. Strange enough, they are both on one page:—"Lately, on her passage from India, Jane, eldest daughter of James Burns, Esq., youngest son of the Ayrshire poet;" and next, "2nd October.—At Doon Foot Mill, Mr. David Watt, miller, in the 68th year of his age. He was schoolfellow with the celebrated Robert Burns, and was the last person baptised in Alloway Kirk."

Thomas Carlyle, in his celebrated essay on Burns which is known wherever the English language is spoken and the songs of Burns sung, gives his opinion of "Tam o' Shanter" in terms which do not equal the warmth of his general appreciation of the life and works of the poet.

"Tam o' Shanter," he says, "is not so much a poem, as a piece of sparkling rhetoric; the heart and body of the story still lies hard and dead. He has not gone back, into that dark, earnest, wondering age, when the tradition was believed, and when it took its rise; he does not attempt, by any new modeling of his supernatural ware, to strike anew that deep mysterious chord of human nature, which once responded to such things; and which lives in us too, and will forever live, though silent now, or vibrating with far other notes, and to far different issues. Our German readers will understand us, when we say, that he is not the Tieck but the Musäus of this tale. Externally it is all green and living; yet look closer, it is no firm growth, but only ivy on a rock. The piece does not properly cohere: the strange chasm which yawns in our incredulous imaginations between the Ayr public-house and the gate of Tophet, is nowhere bridged over, nay the idea of such a bridge is laughed at; and thus the tragedy of the adventure becomes a mere drunken phantasmagoria, or many-colored spectrum painted on ale-vapors, and the farce alone has any reality. We do not say that Burns should have made much more of this tradition; we rather think that, for strictly poetical purposes, not much *was* to be made of it. Neither are we blind to the deep, varied, genial power displayed, in what he has actually accomplished; but we find far more 'Shakespearean' qualities, as these of "Tam o' Shanter" have been fondly named, in many of his other pieces—may we incline to believe that this latter might have been written, all but quite as well, by a man who, in place of genius, had only possessed talent."

It is doubtful whether to the ordinary reader Carlyle has made his meaning any clearer by contrasting Burns with Tieck and Musäus, the latter of whom, in his method of treating subjects borrowed from folklore, our critic thinks he resembles. We may here

state that the "Volksmarchen" of Ludwig Tieck possess all these qualities which Carlyle points out as wanting in similar compositions by Burns and Musäus.



## THE IMMORTAL TALE OF TAM O' SHANTER.

FROM BLACKIE'S EDITION OF BURNS.

And here, one day between breakfast and dinner, he composed "Tam o' Shanter." The fact is hardly credible, but we are willing to believe it. Dorset only corrected his famous "To all ye ladies now on land, we men at sea indite," the night before an expected engagement, a proof of his self-possession; but he had been working at it for days. Dryden dashed off his "Alexander's Feast" in no time, but the labor of weeks was bestowed on it before it assumed its present shape. "Tam o' Shanter" is superior in force and fire to that ode. Never did genius go at such a gallop—setting off at score, and making play, but without whip or spur, from starting to winning post. All is inspiration. His wife with her weans a little way aside among the broom watched him at work as he was striding up and down the brow of the Scaur, and reciting to himself like one demented:

"Now Tam, O Tam! had thae been queans."



His bonnie Jean must have been sorely perplexed—but she was familiar with all his moods, and like a good wife left him to his cogitations. It is “all made out of the builder’s brain;” for the story that suggested it is no story at all, the dull lie of a drunken dotard. From the poet’s imagination it came forth a perfect poem, impregnated with the native spirit of Scottish superstition. Few or none of our old traditional tales of witches are very appalling; they had not their origin in the depths of the people’s heart. There is a meanness in their mysteries, the ludicrous mixes with the horrible; much matter there is for the poetical, and more perhaps for the picturesque, but the pathetic is seldom found there, and never—for Shakespeare we fear was not a Scotsman—the sublime. Let no man therefore find fault with “Tam o’ Shanter,” because it strikes not a deeper chord. It strikes a chord that twanges strangely, and we know not well what it means. To vulgar eyes, too, were such unaccountable on-goings most often revealed of old; such seers were generally doited or dazed—half-born idiots or ne’er-do-weels in drink. Had Milton’s Satan shown his face in Scotland, folk either would not have known him, or thought him mad. The devil is much

indebted to Burns for having raised his character without impairing his individuality :

“O thou! whatever title suit thee,  
Auld Hornie, Satan, Nick, or Clootie,  
Wha in yon cavern grim an' sootie,  
Closed under hatches,  
Spairges about the brunstane cootie,  
To scaud poor wretches!

“Hear me, auld Hangie, for a wee,  
An' let poor damned bodies be;  
I'm sure sma' pleasure it can gie,  
Ev'n to a deil,  
To skelp an' scaud poor dogs like me,  
An' hear us squeel!”

This is conciliatory; and we think we see him smile. We can almost believe for a moment, that it does give him no great pleasure, that he is not inaccessible to pity, and at times would fain devolve his duty upon other hands, though we cannot expect him to resign. The poet knows that he is the Prince of the Air:

“Great is thy pow'r, an' great thy fame;  
Far kend an' noted is thy name;  
An' tho' yon lowin heugh's thy hame,  
Thou travels far;  
An' faith! thou's neither lag nor lame  
Nor blate nor scour.

“Whyles, rangin like a roarin lion,  
For prey, a' 'holes an' corners tryin';  
Whyles on the strong-wing'd tempest flyin',  
Tirlin' the kirks;  
Whyles, in the human bosom pryin',  
Unseen thou lurks.”

That is magnificent—Milton's self would have thought so—and it could have been written by no man who had not studied Scripture. The Address is seen to take; the Old Intrusionist is glorified by “tirling the kirks;” and the poet thinks it right to lower his pride.

“I've heard my reverend Grannie say,  
In lanely glens ye like to stray;  
Or where auld, ruin'd castles, gray,  
Nod to the moon,  
Ye fright the nightly wand'rer's way  
Wi' eldritch croon.

“When twilight did my Grannie summon  
To say her prayers, douce, honest woman!  
Aft yont the dyke she's heard you bummin,  
Wi' eerie drone;  
Or, rustlin' through the boortrees comin'  
Wi' heavy groan.

“Ae dreary, windy, winter night,  
The stars shot down wi' sklentint' light,  
Wi' you mysel', I gat a fright,  
Ayont the lough;  
Ye, like a rash-bush, stood in sight,  
Wi' waving sugh.”

Throughout the whole Address, the elements are so combined in him, as to give the world “assurance o' a deil;” but then it is the Deil of Scotland.

Just so in “Tam o' Shanter.” We know not what some great German genius like Goethe might have made of him; but we much mistake the matter, if “Tam o' Shanter” at Alloway Kirk be not as exem-

plary a piece of humanity as Faustus on May-day Night upon the Hartz Mountains. Faust does not well know what he would be at; but Tam does; and though his views of human life be rather hazy, he has glimpses given him of the invisible world. His wife—but her tongue was no scandal—calls him

\* \* \* “a skellum,  
 A bletherin, blusterin, drunken blellum;  
 That frae November till October,  
 Ae market-day thou wasna sober,  
 That ilka melder wi' the miller,  
 Thou sat as lang as thou had siller;  
 That ev'ry naig was ca'd a shoe on,  
 The smith and thee gat roaring fou on,  
 That at the Lord's house ev'n on Sunday,  
 Thou drank wi' Kirkton Jean till Monday,  
 She prophesied, that late or soon,  
 Thou wad be found deep drown'd in Doon;  
 Or catch'd wi' warlocks in the mirk,  
 By Alloway's auld, haunted kirk.”

That is her view of the subject; but what is Tam's? The same as Wordsworth's: “He sits down to his cups, while the storm is roaring, and heaven and earth are in confusion; the night is driven on by song and tumultuous noise; laughter and jests thicken as the beverage improves upon the palate; conjugal fidelity archly bends to the service of general benevolence; selfishness is not absent, but wearing the mask of social cordiality; and while these various elements of humanity are blended into one proud and

happy composition of elated spirits, the anger of the tempest without doors only heightens and sets off the enjoyment within. I pity him who cannot perceive that in all this, though there was no moral purpose, there is a moral effect.

‘Kings may be blest but Tam was glorious,  
O’er a’ the ills o’ life victorious.’

What a lesson do these words convey of charitable indulgence for the vicious habits of the principal actor in the scene and of those who resemble him! Men who, to the rigidly virtuous, are objects almost of loathing, and whom therefore they cannot serve. The poet, penetrating the unsightly and disgusting surfaces of things, has unveiled, with exquisite skill, the finer ties of imagination and feeling that often bind those beings to practices productive of much unhappiness to themselves and to those whom it is their duty to cherish; and as far as he puts the reader into possession of this intelligent sympathy, he qualifies him for exercising a salutary influence over the minds of those who are thus deplorably deceived.”

We respectfully demur from the opinion of this wise and benign judge, that “there was no moral purpose in all this, though there is a moral effect.” So strong was his moral purpose and so deep the moral feeling

moved within him by the picture he had so vividly imagined, that Burns pauses, in highest moral mood, at the finishing touch,

“Kings may be blest but Tam was glorious;”

and then, by imagery of unequaled loveliness, illustrates a universal and everlasting truth:

“But pleasures are like poppies spread,  
You seize the flow'r, its bloom is shed;  
Or like the snow falls in the river,  
A moment white—then melts for ever;  
Or like the borealis race,  
That flit ere you can point their place;  
Or like the rainbow's lovely form,  
Evanishing amid the storm.”

Next instant he returns to Tam; and humanized by that exquisite poetry, we cannot help being sorry for him “mountin' his beast in sic a night.” At the first clap of thunder he forgets Souter Johnny—how “conjugal fidelity archly bent to the service of general benevolence”—such are the terms in which the philosophical Wordsworth speaks of

“The landlady and Tam grew gracious,  
Wi' favors secret, sweet, and precious;”

and as the haunted ruin draws nigh, he remembers not only Kate's advice but her prophecy. He has passed by some fearful places; at the slightest touch of the necromancer, how fast one after another wheels

by, telling at what rate Tam rode! And we forget that we are not riding behind him,

“When glimmering thro’ the groaning trees,  
Kirk Alloway seem’d in a bleeze!”

We defy any man or woman born to tell us who these witches and warlocks are, and why the devil brought them here into Alloway Kirk. True

“That night, a child might understand,  
The deil had business on his hand;”

but that is not the question—the question is what business? Was it a ball given him on the anniversary of the Fall!

“There sat auld Nick, in shape o’ beast;  
A towzie tyke, black, grim, and large,  
To gie them music was his charge;”

and pray who is to pay the piper? We fear that young witch Nannie!

“Even Satan glowr’d, and fidg’d fu’ fain,  
And hotch’d and blew wi’ might and main;”

and this may be the nuptial night of the Prince—for the tyke is he—of the fallen angels!

How was Tam able to stand the sight, “glorious” and “heroic” as he was, of the open presses?

“Coffins stood round like open presses,  
That shaw’d the dead in their last dresses;  
And (by some devilish cantraip slight),  
Each in its cauld hand held a light.”

Because, show a man some sight that is altogether miraculously dreadful, and he either faints or feels no fear. Or say rather, let a man stand the first glower at it, and he will make comparatively light of the details. There was Auld Nick himself; there was no mistaking him, and there were

“ Wither'd beldams, auld and droll,  
Rigwoodie hags wad spean a foal,  
Louping an' flinging— ”

to such dancing what cared Tam who held the candles. He was bedeviled, bewarlocked and bewitched, and therefore

“ . . . able  
To note upon the haly table,  
A murderer's banes in gibbet airns;  
Twa span-lang, wee, unchristen'd bairns;  
A thief, new-cutted frae a rape,  
Wi' his last gasp his gab did gape;  
Five tomahawks, wi' bluid red rusted;  
Five scimitars, wi' murder crusted;  
A garter, which a babe had strangled;  
A knife, a father's throat had mangled,  
Whom his ain son o' life bereft,  
The gray hairs yet stack to the heft.”

This collection has all the effect of a selection. The bodies were not placed there; but following each others' heels, they stretched themselves out of their own accord upon the haly table. They had received a summons to the festival, which murderer and murdered must obey. But mind ye, Tam could not



see what you see. Who told him that that garter had strangled a babe? That that was a parricide's knife? Nobody—and that is a flaw. For Tam looks with his bodily eyes only, and can know only what they show him; but Burns knew it, and believed Tam knew it too; and we know it, for Burns tells us, and we believe Tam as wise as ourselves; for we almost turn Tam—the poet himself being the only real warlock of them all.

You know why that Haly Table is so pleasant to the apples of all those evil eyes? They feed upon the dead, not merely because they love wickedness, but because they inspire it into the quick. Who murdered his father but at the instigation of that “towzie tyke, black, grim and large”? Who, but for him, ever strangled her new-born child? Scimitars and tomahawks! Why, such weapons never were in use in Scotland. True. But they have long been in use in the wilderness of the western world, and among the orient cities of Mahoun, and his empire extends to the uttermost parts of the earth.

## SOUTER JOHNNY'S BIBLE.

Mr. Murdoch, of the *Ayrshire Post*, Ayr, writing in the issue of that journal of date November 17, 1893, says: "Ah! what an interesting story the Book could tell! Think how often the Book has been taken from the shelf and read at the ingle! Think how often it has been carried to the house of worship and studied with that enthusiasm characteristic of Scotsmen! Think of the joys and the sorrows it has witnessed in its owners' home! No wonder a Burns enthusiast waxes sentimental. Sentiment for the landmarks and relics of Scotland is often disparaged, but sentiment, nevertheless, has torn down thrones and municipalities. It is a beautiful specimen of the family Bible, and well "thoomed." The "brods" are of leather said to have been tanned by Tam o' Shanter's "ancient, trusty, drouthy cronie." The Book consists of the Old Testament, Apocrypha, New Testament, and Psalms. It appears to have been printed in 1762 by Alexander Kincaid, His Majesty's printer, Edinburgh. On the front leaf is the following:

“ ‘This Bible, price seven shillings and sixpence, bought in the year 1768. John Davidson augh this Book. Written in the year 1769.’

“ ‘Between the end of the Old Testament and the beginning of the Apocrypha there is the following written in a beautiful hand; and on comparing the writing with that of Hugh Rodger, Burns’s school-master at Kirkoswald, I found a strong resemblance, particularly in regard to the capital D’s.

“ ‘John Davidson was baptised February 11, 1728. Ann Gillespie, spous to John Davidson, was baptised July 11, 1731. John Davidson and Ann Gillespie was married July 31, 1763. Margrate Davidson was born June 5, 1764. Agnas Davidson was born February 5, 1767. Matthew Davidson was born August 14, 1769, old stile, on Friday, at three of the clock in the afternoon, in the third hour, about the middle of it being under the plannet Venus and the Sine Virgo being the sixth hour, and being the twenty-fourth day of the age of the ——’

The last word cannot be read, but it is probably moon. Over the page and written in various hands is:

“ ‘Ann Davidson was born December 11, 1772. John Davidson was born December 11, 1772, years, old stile. John Davidson was born July, 1804. James Davidson was born May 13, 1806. Jennat Davidson was born June 6, 1808. Hannah Davidson was born November, 1813. William was born December 25, 1815. Matthew Davidson, August, 1820. Thomas Davidson was born on Whitsunday, Anno Domine, 1824.’

“ ‘Souter Johnny was not a paragon of virtue, and some of the goody-goody class of persons may wonder

why a possession of his should be valued so high. Without Tam and the Souter we would have been poorer in poesy to-day; we would have been without some of the noblest thoughts of a master mind."

Writing to the editor of this volume in April, 1894, the same journalist says:

"William and Matthew Davidson, grandsons of the Souter, and both shoemakers in Kirkoswald, died last year, and to show that they were in satisfactory circumstances, I append an extract from the list of Ayrshire wills:—Matthew Davidson left £1751.13.8; William Davidson left £1155.0.8."

It is stated on reliable authority that the relic is to become the property of a nephew of deceased William Davidson. His name is Mr. John Davidson, Woodside, Beith.

## AT ALLOWAY'S HAUNTED KIRK.

By the roadside at the foot of the narrow steps which ascend to Alloway's ancient kirk-yard, two people, who may be called the Ramblers, stumbled upon a blind beggar and a wide-awake dog. It was a dog remarkable in many ways; it was white on a muddy day, sleek and well-nourished, intelligent and altogether unlike the cowed animal tethered to the blind by a leading string. The Ramblers having bestowed a "collection" and received thanks glibly wagged off tongue and tail, mounted the steep steps to explore. They saw right in front of them a picturesque figure meditating among the tombs. Simultaneously a whispered desire to sketch the old man passed between the misguided visitors, when the intended subject of pen-and-pencil attentions slowly raised his voice and his long forefinger. We stood beside the grave of the poet's relatives—a swift look at the tombstone had already intimated as much to the Ramblers, but they murmured thanks for the information. After a minute or so Tam o' Shanter stalked on to an ancient, dilapidated stone and again

lifted his voice in monotone; the coarse Tam o' Shanter bonnet was drawn well down over one side of his wrinkled brow, his gray-blue eye proclaimed the true Scot; the increasing flow of carefully chosen descriptive language gradually enlightened the Ramblers who had innocently believed his appearance to be accidental; it dawned on them that they were in the hands of a guide, and a character. On he stalked through the slippery places; he was in his element, his tongue rolled out with precision the histories of the grass-grown graves with only a rude device partly visible as the key to his harangue. Here was the burial-place of this and that noble family; one dead and gone dame's fate elicited an emphatic opinion from him. "It wis a great peety, she wis a fine leddy. Ye noo staun fornent the grave o' Souter Johnny, deed div ye," said the old man, "an' noo tak' a look ahint ye at the kirk." The Ramblers did so; they saw a great tree at the side of the ruined kirk wall, and, half in and half out of the church a stone baptismal font which had received its water from a little stream outside. "Rabbie Burns wis bapteezed oot o' it, an' jist anither bairn efter him, deed wis he," quoth the latter-day Tam o' Shanter. The Ramblers gazed curiously in at what had once been Allo-

way Kirk, and heard as in a dream who had last "meenistered" therein; but all of a sudden a change was observed to come over the guide, he drew himself up to the limit of his inches, swung his long arms to and fro pendulumwise and began to recite "Tam o' Shanter" in the drollest way imaginable. One Rambler's mind was debating on what the consequences of stopping the swinging arms would be; the other was thinking how strange it was for this old character, in whom mischief-loving Rabbie Burns would have gloried, to be repeating the imaginative lines of Scotland's dearest poet within a stone's cast of where the genius was received into the visible church by the sprinkling of water. In the midst of these natural thoughts the voice ceased with a snap, and the arms stopped with a jerk, and the eye, the eye under the Tam o' Shanter's droop, took an expression which meant toll or—a bit of Tam's mind. An irresistible desire to laugh outright at this jump from the poetry to the prose of life seized the Ramblers, but was sternly repressed. Tam's horny hand was crossed with silver and he took up his meditative position once more among the tombs. Farther down the road a little time was spent in the whitewashed kitchen where the Ploughman-Poet was born. The table was

richly carved—with initials; the window ledge—such a tiny window—was spluttered with ink from visitor's pens; the chairs, at least one of them, had cord tied so that it might not be sat upon. Verily a simple, but hallowed place! Driving towards Ayr, a little later, the eyes of the Ramblers fell on a small but interesting procession hobbling and chuckling homeward. It consisted of a blind beggar, a frisky dog, and Tam o' Shanter. The three were in solemn league and covenant!



## THOM'S STATUES OF "TAM" AND "SOUTER" IN AMERICA.

Two of the characters—Tam o' Shanter and Souter Johnny—made famous by the poet Burns and now immortalized in stone, grace the vestibule of the Free Public Library in Paterson, N. J., U. S. A., where they will in all probability remain for many years to come. These famous statues are larger than life, and occupy positions on each side of the doorway leading to the library reading-room; sitting in highbacked chairs, just as they did at the entrance to the old inn at Ayr. They are carved out of solid blocks of sandstone, and are artistic to the finest detail. The story of the statues is no less interesting than that of Burns's original characters.

They were carved by James Thom, a Scottish sculptor. Thom was born in Ayr, Scotland, in 1790. His father was a poor laboring man and could ill afford to send his boy to the district schools. James, therefore, at a very tender age, was apprenticed to a stonecutter and was compelled to begin work shaping

square building stones cut from the stone quarries of his native country. He served seven years as a stonecutter, but toward the latter part of his apprenticeship he began to carve his since famous Tam o' Shanter group, which was done as a labor of art and love, and in admiration of Burns. The group had been completed for a long time, but Thom lived in comparative obscurity in his native town until it got favorable mention, and from that time he attracted public attention.

After a great deal of urging Thom sent the group to London to be exhibited in the large towns of England. The statues were finally shipped to New York in care of an agent, who was to remit the proceeds of the exhibit to those from whom Thom had received loans. This was in 1834. The statues attracted considerable attention in New York, and were sent to other large cities. But the remittances, at first large, failed at last to reach London, and Thom's creditors became anxious. The sculptor was then sent to America in 1836 to look after the statuary. He arrived none too soon. The agent had become a profligate, and after appropriating all he could gather, he had sold some of the pieces and was about to dispose of the remainder.

Thom came upon the rascal in Paterson, and by process of law compelled him to restore the pieces sold and some of the profits of the exhibition. Remitting the cash to his creditors, the sculptures he placed in another agent's hands, and again "Tam" and his cronies went on their travels. They were shipped to Charleston, and while *en route* the figures of the landlord and his wife went overboard from the deck of the vessel, and only "Tam" and the "Souter" were left.

Thom remained in Paterson. He liked the town because, as he said, it reminded him in some respects of the green fields of his native place. "Tam" and "Souter" came back to him, and for a long time they stood in a corner of the tavern at Little Falls, about four miles from Paterson and where Thom sometimes made his home.

Roswell L. Colt, a wealthy Patersonian, who owned a great deal of real estate at that time, advanced money to Thom to enable him to work a quarry of sandstone he had found at Little Falls, and took the statuary as security at Thom's request. He set "Tam" and "Souter" on the porch of the Roswell Mansion on Colt's Hill. That was over fifty years ago. Thom was never able to redeem the pieces, and as his originals they are greatly prized, although he must

have reproduced them, as a second group, probably made from Little Falls sandstone, was exhibited as his work in Philadelphia and Washington. This group was finally given to the Fairmount Park Association, where it remains to-day as the property of the Park Art Association.

But prosperity proved Thom's adversity. Success was too much for him. He took to strong drink, bad habits, and dissipation; and his property passed away from him, and in a miserable lodging-house in New York, almost if not quite penniless, he died in 1850. Thom left a son who is said to be quite famous as a painter. He visited this country several years ago, but finally returned to Scotland.

The statues now in the library were given to the trustees by Morgan G. Colt and Mrs. De Grasse B. Fowler, a son and daughter of Thom's benefactor.

## THE ORIGINAL VERSION OF TAM O' SHANTER.

Some years ago, Messrs. Adams & Francis, of London, published a work entitled: "Tam o' Shanter and Lament of Mary Queen of Scots; by Robert Burns. The original manuscript reproduced by the Photochromolith process. With an introduction by Moy Thomas, Esq." The process of photolithography renders it impossible that there can be any difference in the minutest particular between the copy and the thing itself. Where the poet hesitated, where he erased, where he inserted lines, even where his hand faltered, may here be seen. The large, upright, bold, handwriting of Burns is well known and characteristic. Some of his alterations are curious. In describing the interior of Alloway Kirk, during the dance of warlocks and witches, the poet wrote:

"The torches climb around the wa',  
Infernal fires, blue bleezing a'."

The lines did not please him; he struck them out, and wrote in the margin the inimitable description:

“ Coffins stood round, like open presses,  
That shaw'd the dead in their last dresses;  
And by some devilish cantraip sleight,  
Each in its cauld hand held a light.”

And among the ghastly objects which Tam beheld on  
the table were—

“ Five tomahawks wi' blude red-rusted,  
Five scimitars wi' murder crusted;  
*Seven gallows-pins, three hangman's whittles,*  
*A raw o' weel-seal'd doctors' bottles;*  
A garter which a babe had strangled,  
A knife a father's throat had mangled.”

The two lines we have printed in italics were seen to detract from the horrors of the spectacle, and the poet wisely expunged them.

## THE ROUTE PURSUED BY TAM.

On this subject, the late Mr. James Paterson, a well-known antiquarian authority, has the following in his "History of Ayrshire," published in 1847:

"The route pursued by Tam on the memorable night of his adventure lay considerably westward from the present road. The descriptive part of this inimitable poem evidently refers to a period antecedent to the existing characteristics of the locality; and unless aware of the circumstance, the reader will attempt in vain to comprehend the landmarks so happily alluded to by the poet. Various opinions are entertained as to the exact line of the old road. Some assert that the whole land between the Doon and Ayr being common property and unenclosed, there was no regular highway, but a number of by-paths, which travelers used to adopt as it happened to suit them. Others contend that the main road diverged from the Town-head or Carrick Vennel of Ayr, across by the house of Burns, till it reached the Doon, which at that time, it is supposed, ran into the sea near Seafield; the road from thence traversing the banks of the river until it

gained the Old Bridge at the Monument. It is possible that a branch road ran in this direction, crossing the Doon by a ford near to where the Low Bridge now stands; but, be this as it may, circumstances strongly argue in favor of a more easterly direction as the path pursued by Tam o' Shanter. This conjecture is not only supported by tradition, but is strictly in accordance with the description of the poet—

“ By this time he was cross the ford,  
Whare in the snaw the chapman smoor'd.”

The ford across the Curtican, now called the Slaphouse Burn, is traceable about two hundred yards west of Slaphouse. On the rising ground near to this a religious house anciently existed, dedicated to St. Leonard, the ruins of which were removed within remembrance. The place where it stood is still called Chapel Field; and a few houses, where a cross road leads to the beach, bear the name of Chapel Park Cottages. A short distance beyond the ford, to the left, the

“ . . . meikle stane  
Where drunken Charlie brak's neck-bane”

is pointed out as the identical stumbling-block over which the unfortunate wight was precipitated. Con-



tinuing its westerly bend from the Chapel Park, the road is supposed to have passed between Belleisle and Summerfield; and is said to be yet partially indicated by the belt of wooding, planted after it had been superseded, along the margin of a level field—formerly a morass—southeast of Belleisle. The connection of the line, however, is lost in cultivation—modern improvement having wrought an entire change on the face of the district; but that it passed through the lands of Greenfield or of Montcharles is apparent from the words of the poet:

“And through the whins and by the cairn  
Where hunters fand the murdered bairn.”

Little more than half a century since, the now fertile lands of Greenfield—in which the cairn, marked by a solitary tree, is situated—were covered with whins and brushwood. The cairn is an ancient tumulus; the tenant, the late Mr. Girdwood, having dugged up, some years ago, a number of urns and other remains of mortality. From the vicinity of the cairn the road appears to have proceeded in the direction of the Doon, and traversing the high banks above the river, wound past the kirk of Alloway on the south, where it gained the “Auld Brig,” rendered famous by the

poet. This supposition is obviously confirmed by the subsequent lines:

“*And near the thorn, aboon the well,  
Where Mungo's mither hanged hersel'.  
Before him Doon pours all his floods,  
The doubling storm roars thro' the woods.*”

Tam had *passed* the cairn, was *nearing* the thorn, and *before him* Doon “pour'd a' his floods.” If the road had traversed the river's banks nearly the whole way from Ayr, as asserted by some, the words “before him” would be inapplicable, because Tam would have been, by the time he passed the cairn, proceeding in a parallel line with the water. The cairn, besides, would have been so far distant from his path as to inspire no feeling of terror. Mungo's Well is in the immediate vicinity of the kirk, on the sloping bank of the river. It may not, perhaps, be generally known that St. Mungo was the patron saint of Alloway. The poet probably indulged his satirical humor in attributing self-destruction to the mother of the saint. In no other direction than from the south, as we have supposed, could the adventurous hero of the tale have had a view of the

“ . . winnock-bunker in the east,  
There sat auld Nick in shape o' beast.”

The churchyard, extending on the north and west to a much greater degree than at present, would have completely precluded his approach.

## ALLOWAY KIRK.

FROM CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL, 1833.

Alloway Kirk, with its little enclosed burial-ground, stands beside the road from Ayr to Maybole, about two miles from the former town. The church has long been roofless, but the walls are pretty well preserved, and it still retains its bell at the east end. Upon the whole, the spectator is struck with the idea that the witches must have had a rather narrow stage for the performance of their revels, as described in the poem. The inner area is now divided by a partition-wall, and one part forms the family burial-place of Mr. Cathcart of Blairston. The "winnock-bunker in the east," where sat the awful musician of the party, is a conspicuous feature, being a small window divided by a thick mullion. Around the building are the vestiges of other openings, at any of which the hero of the tale may be supposed to have looked upon the hellish scene. Within the last few years the old oaken rafters of the Kirk were mostly entire, but they have now been entirely taken away, to form in various shapes, memorials of a place so remarkably signalized

by genius. It is necessary for those who survey the ground in reference to the poem, to be informed, that the old road from Ayr to this spot, by which Burns supposed his hero to have approached Alloway Kirk, was considerably to the west of the present one; which, nevertheless, has existed since before the time of Burns. Upon a field about a quarter of a mile to the northwest of the Kirk is a single tree enclosed within a paling, the last remnant of a group which covered

“ . . . . the cairn  
Whare hunters fand the murder'd bairn; ”

and immediately beyond that object is

“ . . . . the ford,  
Whare in the snaw the chapman smoor'd ”

(namely a ford over a small burn, which soon after joins the Doon), being two places which Tam o' Shanter is described as having passed on his solitary way. The road then made a sweep towards the river; and, passing a well which trickles down into the Doon (where formerly stood a thorn on which an individual, called in the poem “Mungo's mither,” committed suicide), approached Alloway Kirk upon the west. These circumstances may here appear trivial, but it is surprising with what interest any visitor to the

real scene will inquire into and behold every part of it which can be associated, however remotely, with the poem of "Tam o' Shanter." The churchyard contains several old monuments, of a very humble description, marking the resting-places of undistinguished persons, who formerly lived in the neighborhood and probably had the usual hereditary title to little spaces of ground in this ancient cemetery. Among those persons, rests William Burnes, father of the poet, over whose grave the son had piously raised a small stone, recording his name and the date of his death, together with the short poetical tribute to his memory which is copied in the works of the poet. But for this monument, long ago destroyed and carried away piecemeal, there is now substituted one of somewhat finer proportions. But the churchyard of Alloway has now become fashionable with the dead, as well as the living. Its little area is absolutely crowded with modern monuments, referring to persons many of whom have been brought from considerable distances to take their place in this doubly-consecrated ground. Among these is one to the memory of a person named Tyrie, who, visiting the spot some years ago, happened to express a wish that he might be interred in Alloway churchyard;

and, as fate would have it, was interred in the spot he had pointed out within a fortnight. Nor is this all; for even the neighboring gentry are now contending for departments in this fold of the departed, and it is probable that the elegant mausoleum of rank and wealth will soon be jostling with the stunted obelisks of humble worth and noteless poverty.

## TAM O' SHANTER.

FROM CUNNINGHAM'S "LIFE AND LAND OF BURNS."

"So Maggie runs, the witches follow,  
Wi' mony an eldrich skreech and hollow."

The scene of this most vivid and varied of all poems is on the banks of the Doon; and the story is embellished from tradition by the genius of the poet. It has, so far, a foundation in truth; but men without fancy have striven to find for every image and incident a real and substantial origin, as if all the bright threads of the magic web of the story were spun from a veritable distaff, and the characters and incidents which compose it had come, like sitters to a portrait painter, to have their likenesses transferred to the poet's canvas. A cupful of truth will color an ocean of fiction; Burns only emblazoned his tale with a few localities, to give it the air of the district, and never imagined that he was writing a story

"Whose accuracy all men durst swear for."

Yet I have met with men, and critical ones, who averred that they had tippled with the real and original Tam o' Shanter, in the company of the miller

and the smith; had heard the souter tell his queerest stories, when the landlord laughed and the landlady was condescending; and more, than that, assert that this poem, written on the banks of Nith, was conceived on those of Doon; and that they knew the scenes where the characters of the drama dwelt; and were intimate with Nanny, who wore the sark of Paisley harn, and had heard more of her spells than Burns had related. These men no doubt believed what they asserted; but they were ignorant of the ways of the muse; they were unacquainted with her secrets of composition; and as fancy was unknown to them, they supposed that Burns, like a portrait painter, could not paint truly without individual models. Well may we exclaim, with the poet of another isle—

“What an imposter genius is!”

The very scene which the poet's fancy has so strangely peopled, is seen through the poetic medium of a thunder-storm, and by a man excited by superstition and liquor. All that gives air and force to the tale is matter of imagination. Of the realities embellished by the muse, something, however, may be said. I allude not to the Howff in the town of Ayr, where Tam merrily prepared himself for the road;



nor to Doon, with all her floods spanned by a solitary arch; but I mean the storm of rain and fire through which he galloped, and the images of fear and terror which in quick succession prepared him for the blazing Kirk and its infernal inmates. "I seem to gain, in buffeting with the wind," says Sir Walter Scott, in his inimitable diary for 1825, "a little of the high spirit with which in younger days I used to enjoy a Tam-o'-Shanter ride through darkness, wind, and rain; the boughs groaning and cracking over my head, the good horse free to the road and impatient for home, and feeling the weather as little as I did.

'The storm around might rair and rustle,  
We didna mind the storm a whistle.'

If the intrepid poet of Marmion had taken a midnight gallop over the suspicious way where the stout farmer of Kyle rode, he might have thought less of the fire and storm than of the place where the pedler perished in the snow, the stone which broke the neck of tippling Charlie, the cairn where hunters found the murdered child, and the haunted bush on which the mother of poor Mungo hanged herself. All these touching circumstances are, it is said, matters of tradition or of certainty; and had they not existed, the poet would have supplied their place with something

of the like spirit to stimulate Tam, and prepare us for the infernal jubilee.

Of Tam o' Shanter there are few copies existing in the handwriting of Burns; the only one which contains variations is in the library of Abbotsford. A relic so sacred was duly esteemed by its great possessor; he loved to show it to literary visitors and point out two additional lines which distinguished his copy from all others. I shall put them into their place; they will be easily discovered among their companions, for few who read them can fail to have the poem by heart.

“Care, mad to see a man sae happy,  
E'en drown'd himsel' amang the nappy.  
As bees flee hame wi' lades o' treasure,  
The minutes wing'd their way wi' pleasure.  
The cricket raised its cheering cry,  
The kitten chased its tail in joy.  
Kings may be blest, but Tam was glorious,  
O'er a' the ills o' life victorious.”

A poem which Campbell, Wordsworth, and Scott have praised, and on which Cooper has employed his pencil, requires no further commendation. It was written on Nithside, as a bribe to induce Grose to admit Alloway Kirk among his antiquities of Scotland; he composed it in one happy stroll, during a twilight interview with the muse, and in such an

ecstasy, that the tears were running down his cheeks. It bears all the marks of an impassioned fit and is the best and most finished of all his larger poems.

## BURNS AND CAPTAIN GROSE.

BY JOHN H. INGRAM.

“Tam o’ Shanter,” the humorous masterpiece of Burns, was written for and published in Captain Grose’s “Antiquities of Scotland.” It is believed to have been modeled on a little-known poem by Allan Ramsay; to whom, indeed, some of the phraseology as well as the ideas are due, whilst the metre is the same in both pieces. The story told of its rapid production must be regarded with suspicion; this account of the composition, ascribed to Mrs. Burns is picturesque, but scarcely credible; nor does the added testimony of Mr. McDiarmid count for much. The bard’s own allusions in various extant letters to his favorite poem are almost conclusive as to the story having cost him no little time and labor. In April, 1791, writing to Mrs. Dunlop to announce the birth of a son, he said, “on Saturday morning last Mrs. Burns made me a present of a fine boy—rather stouter, but not so handsome as your godson was at his time of life. Indeed, I look on your little namesake to be

my *chef d'œuvre* in that species of manufacture, as I look on 'Tam o' Shanter' to be my standard performance in the poetical line. 'Tis true, both the one and the other discover a spice of roguish waggery that might perhaps be as well spared; but then they also show, in my opinion, a force of genius, and a *finishing polish*, that I despair of ever excelling."

The fact that we are indebted to Grose for the production of "Tam o' Shanter" should cause all admirers of its author to hold the English Captain's memory in respect. Captain Francis Grose, a jeweler's son, was born at Richmond, Surrey, in 1731, and died suddenly of apoplexy, at Dublin, on the 12th of May, 1791, just three weeks after the publication of his book containing the poet's *chef d'œuvre*. Grose, through extravagance or carelessness, got rid of his fortune, and by the time he was thirty was pretty well reduced to poverty. For a livelihood he turned his attention to literature, and became an author of artistic and antiquarian works. Between 1773 and 1788 he produced eight quarto volumes on "The Antiquities of England and Wales," illustrated by about six hundred views from his own drawings. He then proceeded to Scotland to obtain material for a continuation of his work, and at Mrs. Riddell's residence,

Friar's Carse, met Burns. The poet and the antiquarian became fast friends; the former dedicated several humorous verses to the glorification of the immense figure and merry face of the latter. Grose, indeed, was even more famed for his corpulency than for his joviality or literary talents. To induce the antiquarian to furnish an account and an illustration of Alloway Kirk, Burns promised to write a poetic legend in connection with the place; and "Tam o' Shanter" was the result. The bard presented this masterpiece to Grose for publication in his projected work on "The Antiquities of Scotland," and therein it eventually appeared.

Burns gave Grose a letter of introduction to Dugald Stewart, and the contents go far to prove that the poet saw and recognized something more in the antiquarian than merely a jovial boon companion. "Stewart," he tells Grose in a letter alike honorable to all parties concerned, "is a man after your own heart;" his "principal characteristic is your favorite feature—that sterling independence of mind which, though every man's right, so few men have the courage to claim, and fewer still the magnanimity to support."

## TAM O' SHANTER'S RIDE.

BY GEORGE EYRE-TODD.

Never is a man more conscious of his manhood than when, with bridle in hand and a good horse under him, he takes the road at a gallop. As his steed stretches out and the hoof-beats quicken, as the mile-stones fly past and the cool air rushes in his face, he casts care to the winds, his pulse beats stronger, he rejoices to breathe and to live. The pride and the pleasure of this experience has ever appealed to the poets, and the ringing of horse-hoofs echoes through the verse of all ages: in the warrior chants of Israel; through the sounding Virgilian lines; to the reverberating rhythm of the "Ride from Ghent to Aix." But the maddest, most riotous gallop of all is, perhaps, that of the gray mare Meg and her master from Ayr to the Shanter farm. Burns was never more fortunate in his subject than when thus fulfilling his promise of providing a legend for "Alloway's auld haunted kirk." He did not, it is true, with the nice precision of the Augustan laureate, trim his verse to

a mechanical imitation of sound; but the wild rush and deftness of the movement of the poem—the quick succession of humor on pathos, scene upon scene, the ludicrous, the startling, the horrible—carry away the breath, and suggest more vividly than any mere measuring rhythm, the mad daring of that midnight ride.

There is a little, old-fashioned, deep-thatched inn still standing where the street leads southwards out of Ayr. Under its low, brown-raftered roof, it is yet easy to imagine how the veritable hero, Tam, may have sat with his cronies “fast by the ingle, bleezing finely,” while “the night drave on wi’ sangs an’ clatter,” and the storm outside hurled itself fruitlessly against the little deep-set window. It would need all the liquor he had imbibed to fortify the carouser for that fourteen-mile ride into Carrick. A midnight hurricane of rain and wind would be no pleasant encounter on that lonely road, to say nothing of the eerie spots to be passed, and at least one point more than a trifle dangerous. But Tam o’ Shanter was a stout Ayrshire farmer; and, moreover, he was accustomed to face worse ragings than those of the elements; so it may be supposed that, when he had hiccupped a last good-by to his friends, and, leaving



the warm lights of the inn streaming into the street behind him, galloped off into the blackness of the night, it was with no stronger regret than that he must go so soon. Half a mile to his right, as he bucketed southward along the narrow road, he could hear the ocean thundering its diapason on the broad beach of sand, and at the places where he crossed the open country, its spray would strike his cheek and fly inland with the foam from Maggie's bit. Sometimes, when the way led through belts of beech and oak woods, the branches would roar and shriek overhead, as they strove with maniac arms against the tempest.

The old road to Maybole, and that which Tam o' Shanter took, ran a little nearer the sea than the one which did duty in Burns's time, and still serves its purpose; and about a mile out of Ayr it crosses the small stream at the ford where "in the snaw the chapman smoored," at which, on the newer road, a curious adventure is said to have befallen the poet's father. There was formerly no bridge across this stream; and the legend runs that William Burnes, a few hours before the birth of his son, in riding to Ayr for an attendant, found the water much swollen, and was requested by an old woman on the farther side

to carry her across. Notwithstanding his haste he did this; and a little later, on returning home with the attendant, he was surprised to find the woman seated by his own fireside. It is said that when the child was born it was placed in the gipsy's lap, and she, glancing into its palm, made a prophecy, which the poet has turned in one of his verses:

He'll ha'e misfortunes great and sma',  
But aye a heart aboon them a';  
He'll be a credit till us a'—  
We'll a' be proud o' Robin.

If all gipsy predictions were as well fulfilled as this of the poet, the dark-skinned race would be far sought and courted.

A few strides beyond the stream his gray mare had to carry Tam past a dark, uncanny spot—"the cairn where hunters fand the murder'd bairn." It was covered then with trees, and one of them still stands marking the place. To the left of the old road here, and hard by the newer highway, lies the humble cottage, of one storey, where Robert Burns was born. It has been considerably altered since then, having been used until recently as an alehouse, and further accommodation having been added at each end. But enough of the interior remains untouched to allow of

its original aspect being realized. The house is the usual "but and ben," built of natural stones and clay, and neatly whitewashed and thatched. In the "but," the apartment to the left on entering from the road, there is little alteration; and it was here, in the recessed bed in the wall, that the poet first saw light. The plain deal dresser, with dish-rack above, remains the same; and the small, square, deep-set window still looks out behind, over the fields his father cultivated. An old mahogany press with drawers still stands next the bed; the floor is paved with irregular flags; and the open fireplace, with roomy, projecting chimney, occupies the gable. An extra door has been driven through the southeast corner to allow the profane crowd to pass through, and a larger window has been opened toward the road, that they may see to scratch their names in the visitor's book; but the rest of the apartment toward the back is little changed, if any, since the eventful night when

" . . . a blast o' Janwar win'  
Blew hansel in on Robin."

The hour of his ride was too dark, however, for the galloping farmer to see so far over the fields. A weirder sight was in store for him. A few hundred yards farther on, when, by a well (which is still flow-

ing) he had passed the thorn (now vanished) where "Mungo's mither hanged hersel'," just as the road plunged down along the woody banks of Doon, there, a little to the left,

" . . . glimmering thro' the groaning trees  
Kirk Alloway seem'd in a bleeze."

The gray walls of the little kirk are standing yet among the graves, though the last rafters of the ruined roof were carried off long since to be carved into mementoes. The tombs of Lord Alloway's family occupy one end of the interior, and a partition wall has been built dividing off that portion; but otherwise the place remains unchanged. The bell still hangs above the eastern gable, and under it remains the little window with a thick mullion, the "winnock bunker" in which the astonished farmer, sitting on his mare, and looking through another opening in the side wall, saw the queer musician ensconced. A more eerie spot on a stormy night could hardly be imagined, the trees shrieking and groaning around, the Doon roaring in the darkness far below, while the thunder crashed overhead, and the lurid glare of lightning ever and again lit up the ruin. But with the unearthly accessories of warlocks and witches, corpse lights and open coffins, with the screech of the pipes

and grotesque contortions of the dancers, the place must pass comparison in horror. Yet, inspired by "bold John Barleycorn," the farmer looked eagerly in on the revels till, fairly forgetting himself in the height of his admiration, with his shout of "Weel done, Cutty Sark!" the lights went out, the pipes stopped, and the wrathful revelers streamed after him like angry bees. A few bounds of his mare down that narrow, winding, and rather dangerous road would carry Tam to the bridge, and the clatter of terrified Maggie's hoofs, as she plunged off desperately through the trees, seems to echo there yet. All the world knows how she carried her master in safety across the keystone of the bridge at the cost of her own gray tail. The feat was no easy one, for the single arch (still spanning the river there) was high and steep and narrow. Beyond the Doon the old road rises inland, covered deep with ash and sauch trees, to the open country; and Tam, pale and sober no doubt, but breathing freer, had still twelve long miles before him to the far side of Kirkoswald in Carrick, where sat his wife,

"Gathering her brows like gathering storm,  
Nursing her wrath to keep it warm."

## TAM O' SHANTER.

FROM "BURNS AND THE KIRK" BY ALEXANDER WEBSTER.

"Tam o' Shanter" may be regarded as the sequel to "The Holy Fair." The purpose of the latter is the exposure of the gross desecration recurrent in the precincts of the house of God, and of the profanation of the Sacrament by sensuality, hypocrisy, and revelry; the inner intention of the former being an exposure of the baleful superstition regarding supernatural evil beings, fostered by the Church in the name of religion. "Tam o' Shanter" shows a desecration of the kirk itself by the midnight dance therein of "warlocks and witches" to the music of the devil. In "The Holy Fair" we are not taken into the Kirk, nor does the devil appear on the scene, though "Black Russell" speaks loudly of the "vast, unbottomed, boundless pit, fill'd fou o' lowan brumstane." The carnival goes on outside the kirk, though within touch of it. But in "Tam o' Shanter" we are shown the interior of the kirk, with "Auld Nick"

piping in the "winnock-bunker in the east," president of the witches' orgie. One may easily imagine the orgie taking place in the Kirk of Mauchline, on the night of the Holy Fair. To have placed it there would only have been to extend the Fair, and have it taken up, as the night wore on and the day revelers had gone, inside the kirk, by creatures from the "boundless pit." The revel, so placed, would have been a fitting sequel to the profanity of the Fair, and some of "the godly," searching for another "jar," might have been represented as seeing it. But the scene was not so planned by Burns; and we take it as we find it, and see in it a parable of superstition of the most instructive kind.

The poem originated in a friendly bargain of the author with Captain Grose, the antiquary; Burns undertaking to supply a witch or ghost story relating to Kirk Alloway if the Captain would include the kirk in his work on *Scottish Antiquities*. Burns set to work to fulfil his part of the compact on a bright autumn day in 1790. He was then at Ellisland, and went out with writing materials to "a broomy ridge by the river side" which was "a much-frequented haunt" of his, and wrote the poem in "one continuous fit of inspiration." It was a wondrous day's work!



It is told as "an ascertained fact" that his wife (anxious, no doubt, to know what engrossing theme detained him so long) discovered him in "an agony of laughter, reciting aloud certain lines of the poem which he had just conceived, the tears in the meantime rolling down his cheeks; and that she withdrew from the neighborhood for a moment, along with her children, that they might not interrupt his ecstasy."

Whatever rank we may give this poem relatively to the other poems of Burns, it must ever appear to us as a marvelous production; and whether we enter into the spirit of its humor, or hush our mirth at the thrilling touch of its passages of sublime pathos, we feel recreated and instructed on reading or listening to the reading of the poem.

The tale, as is well known, turns upon the tarrying of its hero by the change-house "ingle bleezing finely," enjoying "the reaming swats, that drank divinely." The "unco sight" of "warlocks and witches in a dance," the catastrophe to his mare, the narrow escape of Shanter himself from the witchly clutch—all arise out of the too-freely-quaffed "nappy," and the moral is obvious. But it has been charged against Burns that his poems and songs encourage



drinking; and that even where, as in this poem, he makes plain the dangers of drink, he throws such a glamor over the act of getting fou that it is attractive. It may be said here, in passing, that in such poems as "Scotch Drink," "The Earnest Cry," etc., Burns only drew drinking pictures true to life in his day, and sang the common feeling with regard to drink. And when he becomes the advocate of drink it is of the social glass, with which there is flow of sympathy, and not of sensuous solitary drinking for the love of drink. And in his songs of drink it is the same, the drinking is permeated with good fellowship. In fact, it is the fellowship and not the drinking that he glorifies.

In "Tam o' Shanter" he paints the drinking-scene graphically. There is a coziness and cantiness and jollity about it which is catching; but the feeling is plainly delusive. Tam "was glorious, o'er a' the ills o' life victorious;" but it was in sensuous stupidity. The souter's "queerest stories," the landlady's "favors," "the landlord's laugh," were but "phantasmagoria and many-colored spectra" that deluded as they delighted. With all their jollity, Tam and "his ancient, trusty, drouthy crony" are fools, and that is made evident enough. They sit between land-

lord and landlady as in a snare, and the wiles of the "nappy" are plied 'round about them till sense and cash are gone. Happy as they are, we are made to feel that they are so at the expense of everything truly manly; that the brain of the drinker is debased while it is dazzled. Though there is a true touch of humanity in their comradeship, their indulgence of sensuous appetite dehumanizes; and we see that if they meet as men they part as sots. There is not a single word or suggestion in the poem that is drink-enticing. Even the invocation of "John Barleycorn" tells against his power. The scorn of dangers which he inspires is an illusion. To say nothing of the wife left in the neglect which begets wrath, or of the unco sight in the bleezing kirk, or even the moral at the end of the poem, all of which tell against drinking—that piece of natural and exquisite pathos introduced as anti-climax to Tam's gloriousness is enough to show the folly of such glory:

"But pleasures are like poppies spread," etc.

In "Tam o' Shanter" (whatever may be the case in other pieces) the moral drift is reformatory. The poet honestly describes the drinking custom, credits it with all the sensuous enjoyment belonging to it; but confronts it with higher things, reveals its subter-

ranean connections, and passes a judgment against it which is impressed with divine sanction.

But all the other scenes in the drama only lead up to the great scene in "Alloway's auld haunted kirk." It was the kirk which the poet had in his mind's eye all the while, according to the bargain with Captain Grose. Most cunningly and profoundly is the scene laid therein, and with a deep religious purpose. The auld haunted kirk furnished him with a habitation wherein to place on view the objects which superstition, supported by religious authority, set up before the imagination. He knew well how orthodoxy made an ally of the devil and his imps, and held the people in terror through them. He was aware of the way in which the underworld had been peopled with all manner of evil spirits, and how even the air of common life had been filled with bodiless creatures of malignant influence. He knew how terrified most people were in the darkness, how they trembled at any strange sound, how completely they were the victims of their own ignorant fears. And he realized how much the Church was to blame for this, how it had prevented the investigation of natural phenomena, hindered the exercise of reason, and rooted its authority in superstition. He perceived how "preachers

of the Gospel " had used the fear of the devil as a strong inducement to the outward observances of religion," and how they had enhanced their authority by " their supposed ability to counteract this fearful adversary." And so he felt that something effective needed to be done to deliver men from these superstitions.

In his " Address to the Deil " he plainly spoke a liberating word, and delivered the soul from " the hangman's whip." In " Tam o' Shanter " he pursues the same purpose, and boldly seats the devil in the kirk, with all his hellish brood around him, to show religion the objects of its superstition.

The placing of the " towzie tyke " in the winnock-bunker in the east of the Auld Kirk to superintend the dance of " warlocks and witches " was no mere fiction imagined to scare one in whose " noddle " the " swats reamed," but was a matter-of-fact gathering 'round the pulpit of the hellish beings of fearsome creation. There was no more fitting place for the humorous exposure of the progeny of superstition than the kirk itself. The evil brood were born and bred under Church influence, and the parentage had to be brought home to it, so that it might put them to dissolution. With the very sublimity of daring,

Burns gathered "the devil and his angels" in the kirk, and with them all the terrors of death, and then bade men look in to see the sight. As if emerging from its own floor or oozing out of its own atmosphere, there appeared in the "haunted kirk," at the call of the wizard-poet, the ugly creatures of darkness, the hideous things of the grave, the denizens of hell, the seething spawn of superstition. The kirk becomes Tophet, Hades, Gehenna, hell. Many a time had the walls echoed with talk of such things, often had the preacher pictured such beings to terrified hearers, frequently had "the ill place" been opened in imagination to clinch "the offer of salvation;" but in the poem, as if the very walls had given back the words, and they had become flesh, the hellish beings themselves come into life in the kirk, and hold their unholy revel on the sacred floor! The Church could hardly have been prepared for such an invasion; but it was the just reaction of religious superstition, and it could not consistently refuse to look at the ugly creatures with whom it had made its members familiar. And to look at them in the light of common sense was to be convicted of superstition. In that light they were seen to be creatures of fancy, begotten of ignorance and terror; and which had no

existence in fact whatever. To disabuse the mind of the mischievous fancy was, no doubt, one of the objects that Burns had in writing this poem. He knew well that religion was corrupted by it; that the darkness, which was God's as well as the light, was made terrible to men through it; that knowledge of the causes of strange phenomena was hindered by it; and that the enslaving power of the clergy was maintained by it. And so he set his humor to work, and made men able to laugh at the gross images of their own creation.

To help us to understand the work that he had to do in dissolving the fancy of witchcraft and the general superstition existent regarding unknown forces in action around men, we must know something of the ideas then current concerning "warlocks and witches." Looking back from the earliest case of real importance in the prosecution of witches, Walter Scott says: "For many years the Scottish nation had been remarkable for a credulous belief in witchcraft." The idea underlying the belief was the existence of the devil. He, it was thought, purchased the services of persons whose bodies and souls he bought for some payment or other. These were, at his command and

by his power, the instruments of all mischief and everything termed evil.

Everything mysterious of a baleful kind was regarded as witchery. When anything inexplicable happened to man or beast it was a witch who did it. If a field were blighted or weeds come up in the crop, it was some spiteful warlock's doing. If a child fell sick or a woman miscarried it was the effect of some "evil eye." Whatever occurred by accident or misfortune was attributed to witchcraft. Witches could, by satanic skill, take the shape of frogs, cats, hares, crows, spectres of all kinds. They had, it was supposed, power over all the elements: they could ride on the winds, travel in the air, or run underground. And everything was at their mercy—crops, property, and life itself. By means of them the devil was able to be omnipresent, and to carry out his perpetual malignity against the Infinite Goodness.

The first case of witchcraft in Scotland, of which an account is preserved, is that of the case of the "Earl of Mar, brother of James III. of Scotland, who fell under the King's suspicion for consulting with witches and sorcerers how to shorten the King's days. On such a charge, very inexplicitly stated, the unhappy Mar was bled to death in his own lodgings without



either trial or conviction; immediately after which catastrophe twelve women of obscure rank, and three or four wizards, or warlocks, as they were termed, were burnt at Edinburgh to give a color to the Earl's guilt." After that, cases of witches prosecuted to death are recorded in great numbers. These, as Scott declares, present a "certain monotony." A curious case, typical of others, occurred in Dumfriesshire half-a-century or so before the birth of Burns. One Bessie Kennedy was tried by the Kirk-Session of Tintwald on a charge of having cursed the horse of one John Carruthers on a certain Sabbath, and wished that it might *shoot to dead*; and, further, with having, when the said John told her that his horse had fallen sick through her malignity, "wished that the *shoot of dead* might light on him and it both" (that is, that he and it might perish by some fatal internal lapse, or "schute," of the system.) The charge was not proved, and Bessie was dismissed; being warned, however, to exercise "greater watchfulness for the future." It was cases of that kind that suggested to Burns the line in "Tam o' Shanter"—"For mony a beast to dead she shot." Kate Steen or Stephen, who, it is thought, is the person represented under the character of "Cutty Sark," was "an inoffensive but



peculiar woman; of diminutive stature and sometimes of strange attire; of vagrant but industrious habits; who carried her 'rock and spindle' with her from house to house to spin; and was kindly, or at least civilly, received everywhere, from fear, perhaps, of her reputed supernatural gifts as much as from affection."

Now, in the fact of Katie's "peculiarity" we come upon the secret of the fancy of witchcraft. If a woman happened to be in any way "peculiar" in feature, dress, or habit she was thought to be a witch. And the curious thing is that, when the peculiarity consisted of an unusual heightening of some feature or faculty; such as unusually large and bright eyes, extraordinary fluency of speech, unusual skill of hand, or uncommon knowledge of any kind, it was set down to witchcraft.

Those who were regarded as witches mostly belonged to the lower classes; and, when we remember that it was in feudal times that the prosecution of witches was most prevalent in this country, we may conclude that those charged with witchcraft were generally independent, far-seeing, courageous women who took the liberty to reprove the evil doings of those above them. They were the social protestants

and insurgents of their day, impelled to speak and act against the powers that kept the people down. By analyzing the reports of the trials of witches in Scotland, we find that either some of the gentry, some laird or lady, or some officious magnate of the law in the interest of the aristocracy was the complainant; and the charge was generally that of shooting at a laird, or having bewitched the laird's affections, or of meddling in some way with the property of the well-to-do. Walter Scott says—"The gentry hated witches, because the diseases and death of their relations and children were often imputed to them." We may infer, therefore, that those supposed to be witches were women of uncommon appearance and power, more talented than was usual with women of their station; women of extraordinary energy and insight, who, with startling boldness or with careful but ominous speech, spoke against the wrongs they saw and felt.

The same thing applies to wizards, or warlocks. It appears that they were not so numerous as witches, but they were generally men who had an extraordinary insight into nature—men of humble rank endowed with an extra amount of common sense, curiosity, and intelligence; who delighted in the investigation of natural things. They were, in fact,

the scientists of their time. But they were dreaded. They were seen to take to do with stones, plants, and animals in a way that was not canny; to explore the rocks, the woods, and the pools, and to have their houses full of strange things. And they were not only social protestants but theological protestants: heretic, infidels, men who went not to church, nor held the common religious ideas. Quite a large number of charges against warlocks consist of such things as these—"Circulating pretended prophecies to the unsettlement of the State, and the endangering of the King's title;" enquiring into the date of the King's birth, anticipating his death, etc. We may judge by that that the warlocks were simply the radicals of their time; men who, when 'twas treason to think and speak freely, had dared to go beyond political and social orthodoxy. We find among other charges the charge of "breaking and destroying crosses" brought against warlocks, and that shows us that the warlocks were religious reformers. There can be no doubt that the enmity shown by the ecclesiastical powers against "warlocks and witches" is to be accounted for by the fact that the persons supposed to be in league with Satan were heterodox in thought and conduct.

In these days ecclesiastical authority was very strict. It was ordained then by "the civil magistrate" (in Aberdeen at least) "that nae man sall keep from observin and keein the sermonis and prechingis on the ouik days: to set Tuesday and Thursday for hearing of the Word of God, and Christian evangell treulie prechit. Maisters of households, their wyffs, bairns, and servantis and other inhabitants, cum to discretion of years, should be catechised every Thursday." If a man had some doubt about the "treulie prechingis," or expressed some skeptical opinion regarding "the Word of God," he was liable to be regarded as a warlock; and if a woman stayed at home to nurse a sick child or to perform some needful domestic duty instead of going to the "prechingis," she was likely to be looked upon as a witch.

In fact, all who in any way spoke against or disobeyed the ecclesiastical ordinance were liable to be dragged to the stake. These ordinances were, therefore, felt to be very oppressive, and there was much insubordination in connection with them. This was the case especially with regard to the Sabbath, which was strictly kept. The revolt against it led to the idea of the "witches' Sabbath." It was thought that those who were regarded as witches, not being at church,

were away having a meeting by themselves; and there is a curious confession of a woman to the effect that the witches when they met were so numerous that "they were told off into squads, or covines, as they were termed, to each of which were appointed two officers. One of them was called the maiden of the covine, and was usually, like Tam o' Shanter's Nannie, a girl of personal attractions, whom Satan placed beside himself, and treated with particular attention.

. . . The ceremonial of the Sabbath meetings was very strict. The Foul Fiend was very rigid in exacting the most ceremonious attention from his votaries, and the title of Lord when addressed by them."

The ideas originated in connection with Sabbath superstition, and the Church took care to show by means of them that the devil's Sabbath was as severe as that of the Church. And it also prejudiced the people in favor of its own practices by fostering the fancy that the witches at their Sabbath meeting dug up the bodies of unchristened infants in order to use the materials of them for their sorceries. The moral was plain—have your children christened and then the witches will not get them. It is likely that the idea of the witches' Sabbath rose up out of the condemned practice of walking on the Sabbath—a prac-

tice which sensible and courageous people kept up in spite of the censure of the Church.

It is the shame of Calvinism in this country that it was the cause of the burning of thousands of innocent and highly virtuous persons as witches. Under its favor witch-hunting became a trade, and we read of one Hopkins, who, along with a male and female assistant, went up and down the country discovering witches. His usual price was "twenty shillings a town," and for that sum he and his assistants undertook to hunt down all the witches in it. "His principal mode of discovery was to strip the accused persons naked, and thrust pins into various parts of their body, to discover the witch's mark." If this failed, he tied the great toes and thumbs of his victim together, wrapped her in a sheet, and dragged her through a pond or river. If she floated she was a witch, and was put to death. He also kept the persons put into his power waking till they were made mad, or he dragged them about till, by extreme weariness, and the pain of blistered feet, they were glad to confess having the power of witchery. We need not wonder that poor, infirm, sensitive women, stripped naked and tortured, declared that they were actually in league with Satan. Nor is it to be won-

dered at that others who had gifts for which they could not account admitted the possibility of their being inspired by the devil. Admissions of the kind were extorted over and over again from the hapless creatures who fell under the persecution of the Church.

But in order fully to comprehend what there is in the "warlocks and witches" as they are shown to us by Burns, dancing in "Alloway's auld haunted kirk," it is necessary to know their natural history. They are, as they appear in theologic thought, the servants of satan. To find the origin of the idea of the devil we require to go back to the region of mythology. The idea of him had its birth in the experience which primitive man had of a power with which he had to struggle for physical life and for spiritual rightness. That power which lived in the stubborn earth, and against which (as it seemed to him) he had to work in his tillage, primitive man imagined as an evil power, an enemy of the sky or heaven power, the malignant cause of all human suffering. That power had its emissaries in all the forces with which man had to struggle; the subtle forces perpetually waging war against life in all forms and conditions. Invisible, but in continual activity, these hosts of evil



operated throughout the world, making always for darkness, cold, and barrenness against the kindly hosts of light, heat, and fertility. They were the cause of the tempest and the blight; winter was theirs, and the inclement season; theirs also were disease, pain, and death. Such was the explanation which primitive man, in his ignorance, gave of the forces of Nature with which he had to struggle for food, shelter, and the conditions of happy life: they were evil beings, actuated by hate and malice. That explanation occurs in all the mythologies.

On being introduced into modern theology, witches took the place of demons in ancient theology. In the book of Enoch we have descriptions of demons in which there may be discerned the germs of later ideas of the angels of the devil, witches, etc. It represents them as the offspring of the sons of God, and the daughters of men. It gives their number as two hundred, and declares that they devour all which the labor of men produces, injure animals, and even kill and eat men. They taught sorcery and every species of iniquity, and for this Jehovah sent his holy angels to bind the chief demons hand and foot, and cast them into the lower depth of the fire, in torments and confinement to be shut up for ever.



In the Talmud, which represents a large body of oral tradition which grew up in the Jewish Schools in Palestine and was continued long after the time of Christ, we find a development of demonology. In the cabalistic portion of the Talmud it is said—"All the spaces of creation are filled with good and bad spirits, these being divided into distinct orders having chiefs over them. The number of evil spirits, it is declared is incalculable. They swarm around every human being: a thousand on his right hand, ten thousand on his left. Their abode is a dark region under the moon. Their bodies are of water, fire, and air. They enjoy their meat and drink, and propagate their species after the manner of men."

In the dark ages, demonology became a pseudo-science. The schoolmen arranged the numbers and ranks of the demons, and the districts apportioned to the demon chiefs. They reckoned that the armed force of Lucifer comprised nearly two thousand four hundred legions, that is fourteen million, four hundred thousand. All these were to them veritable imps of Satan, creatures of flesh and blood regularly trained for their hellish war. It is their ideas to which Milton gave shape in "Paradise Lost."

It was common, then, for the preachers to declare

that they had seen processions of damned souls, mounted on horses of fire, which bore them along with the speed of the whirlwind, and without a moment's rest, to the gates of flame. All that was to terrify the people into submission to the Church. The terror was carried into Protestantism. Martin Luther says in his "Table Talk"—"The devils are near us, and every moment ceaselessly plot against our life, health, and salvation. There are numerous devils in the woods, the waters, the deserts, in marshes and pools, lying in wait to injure human beings. Some there are in black and thick clouds occasioning thunder, lightning, hail, and storms; they blight meadows and poison the air."

John Wesley was of Luther's opinion. He said that the giving up of belief in witchcraft is in effect giving up the Bible. Jonathan Edwards held the same sort of belief; and Richard Baxter, whose writings were in the day of Burns the usual Sabbath reading—and were so till very lately—taught the same thing. Baxter took an active interest in the witch trials of his day, and believed in the confessions which the tortured creatures made. "Turn or burn," Baxter said to those whom he addressed.

Such then, is an outline of the natural and theo-

logical history of "warlocks and witches," and by which it will be seen how deeply the idea of those beings as allies of the devil had entered into religious thought.

To sanction the belief, the theologian had but to quote the Levitical command, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." The reading of that barbarous command as an order given by God was the fatal cause of the witch-burning in this and other countries; but the command cannot reasonably be held to have been given by God. The persons called "witches" in the Bible were soothsayers. Their power to foretell the future and summon the shades from the world below was not doubted. They were credited with all the power of the Hebrew soothsayers; but they were heathen, and might by their incantation seduce the worshippers of Jehovah; and so the priests ordered them to be slain. The command is an illustration of Hebraic religious bigotry—a piece of priestly jealousy on the part of Hebrew priests. Walter Scott, though he took the orthodox view of the command concerning witches, admits that "there was no contract of subjection to a diabolic power, no infernal stamp or sign of such a fatal league, no revelings of satan and his hags, and no infliction of disease or misfortune upon

good men" implied in the references to witches in Scripture. Indeed, it was not from the Bible that the idea of witches came which caused them to be regarded as servants of the devil and burnt as such, but from mediæval speculation, based on the old nature-myths of evil agencies.

Now, in working our way out of this question of "warlocks and witches" there are two things to be apprehended; first, that the idea of those persons as emissaries of satan is a modern survival of the old idea of evil forces in nature adverse to man. That superstition, taken up by orthodoxy, was formulated and presented in the creeds in the now familiar dogmas regarding the devil and hell. It was that superstition that Burns had in view when he lit up Alloway Kirk and showed the revel therein of the progeny of fanciful speculation.

Burns did not know what evolution has revealed to us. He did not know the facts that science has shown of the orderliness, lawfulness, and beneficence of the Power that works through nature. It is given to us to see that "evil is simply a temporary passing condition. . . . nothing more or less than mal-adjustment. The devil and sin and sorrow and calamity and sickness and tears and death all resolve them-

selves into this one word." But though Burns could not see this, he felt deeply the moral inconsistency of the idea of evil forces in nature with the idea of a good God, or the Over-ruler of nature and the Father of man. And he felt, too, how demoralizing in its influence on conduct was the superstition about "warlocks and witches." While men believed that they were surrounded and even possessed by beings who were the almost almighty agents of the devil, it was natural for them to feel that there was little use in struggling against adverse powers, that there was no possibility of high character open to them, that the burden of devilry was one which, in their fallen condition, they must needs carry. The devil was a most convenient excuse for all sorts of immorality: who, indeed, was there to blame for evil but him? If men were the children of the devil, ought they not to do justice to their parentage? Burns saw that the devil was a shelter to immorality that ought to be thrown down, and that it was necessary for the Church as a teacher of morality to lay the cause of evil where it ought to be laid; viz., on ignorance of natural law, and mal-adjustment with natural forces. The entire brood of superstition flies at the touch of knowledge of natural causes, and the devil himself is dissolved

in the process of human adjustment with the Power that works through nature, moulding man.

The other thing to be apprehended in clearing up this subject is that those who were regarded as "warlocks and witches" were the most advanced men and women of their station—seers, prophets, reformers in humble life; radicals, protestants, heretics in relation to the "chief priests and pharisees" of their day. Had Mary Somerville, who mastered all the sciences; Frances Power Cobbe, who, though deeply religious, cannot take the name Christian; Mrs. Besant, who, while a devout and zealous servant of man, scorns the orthodox notion of serving God, lived two hundred years ago they certainly would have been burnt as witches. And had Hugh Miller, of Cromarty; Thomas Edwards, of Banff; and Robert Dick, of Thurso, been seventeenth-century men they would have been put to death as warlocks. Above all, if Charles Darwin had been a contemporary of Richard Baxter, he would have been treated as the captain of the devil's host. The "warlocks and witches" were simply the martyrs of their day. The persecuting spirit of the Church had become so degraded that it seized on anything on which it could lay hands. Learning in those days was just beginning to be universal; the democracy

were commencing to think; and the witch-hunt was the sport to which the degenerate sleuth-hounds of despotic power betook themselves. The whole proceedings against witchcraft were the clergy's retaliation on the democratic murmurs, criticisms, and insubordinations threatening to become dangerous to the influence of the Church. They were the answer of the presbyter (who was but priest in another form) to the desire for freedom of thought and conduct desired by the mass of the people. When woman sought wisdom at the doors of the Church she was made a witch. When the workman sought justice from the State he was treated as a warlock. They were made heretics and criminals for wanting to know, and for acting according to their highest reason. The struggling, strange, inquiring, thinking, and outspeaking men and women who were treated as sorcerers were actually the forerunners of the scientists of our day. They were students of nature, persons of singular elevation of thought, of extraordinary common sense, and of unusual virtue; the leaders and redeemers of their class—none the less the soothsayers of the democracy though they were unconscious of having any extraordinary gift or call. The opposition which orthodoxy shows against science to-day is a survival



of its treatment of witchcraft. It is, in fact, the old witch-burning in another form. The male or female heretic and reformer of to-day, who has to suffer clerical and social persecution, is simply the warlock or witch of yesterday.

All praise, then, to the courageous poet who wrote for us the parable of "Tam o' Shanter," and in Alloway's auld "haunted kirk," showed us the forms of the ecclesiastical spectres and social ghosts which still haunt the thought and life of to-day, and taught us to rise above superstition and slavery into the joyous light of knowledge and the sweet air of manly freedom. Through the bold humor of the poem, all the more effective though not openly declared, there shines the deeper lesson of the piece; viz., that if men would have religion and morality made true and serviceable, the Church free from superstition, and the State free from tyranny, and every effort of the mass of the people to rise to higher life find ready aid in the powers that be, they must soberly, rationally, and devoutly give themselves to the pursuit of knowledge; demand that those appointed to teach shall teach what is really true, that the pulpit shall stand for the highest ideas and the surest facts, and that the minister of



religion shall be one who can show men how to adjust themselves more harmoniously and vitally with the divine powers of life, so that mind, and heart, and soul, according well, may make one music of realized religion. And not only so, but they must demand of those who are set to rule that they rule righteously, not to favor any, but to serve all. So long as the people are sensual, the Church will be warranted in her superstition and the State in its despotism; but when once the "Souter" and the "Farmer" become in earnest for a manly morality, both Church and State will be radically reformed.

## A MEDIÆVAL TAM O' SHANTER.

### ORIGIN OF BURNS'S GREAT CREATION.

Burns is, of course, his own best commentator, and his original prose version of the Tam o' Shanter story, as contained in the letter to Captain Grose, throws the fullest light upon the poem. The letter proves that Burns's great creation has a higher truth than would have belonged to it had it contained more imagination and been less closely a transcript from country talk. Just by reason of its fidelity and its freedom from material embellishment, it possesses an historical value enhancing the admiration due to its luminous descriptive, narrative, and poetic power. Pegasus is not the less Pegasus because the poet chose to saddle and bridle him with facts. Leaving the pure wit and poetry out of account altogether, and considering Tam o' Shanter from a severely pedestrian standpoint, you find it a condensed but brilliant record of popular conceptions in demonology, witchcraft, and the ethics and practise of genial good-fellowship.

Tam o' Shanter, in that aspect, is not Burns's ; it is Ayrshire folk-lore. It has, moreover, a moral, however subsidiary. The poet assures us in prose that the tailless mare served long as an awful example to Carrick farmers of the dangers of drink, and his verse closes with a quasi-serious and immortal exhortation on the same lines extended to the world at large.

Viewed in this sub-historical light as a document in folk-lore, and in its unique way a temperance lecture, the tale will repay a momentary survey of its supernatural characters. The witches, Burns scarcely tries to make grim ; they are grotesque. They are not Macbeth's sort. They are the witches of a dead creed. The belief which had so suddenly, late in the sixteenth century, attained such vast dimensions and caused so much barbarity had lost its power in little over a hundred years, and in two centuries was virtually extinct. The devil, the "touzie tyke, black, grim and large," sitting by his "winnock-bunker in the east," is rather a piece of comedy than of tragedy. He is only suggested, not full drawn ; but what there is of him is the devil of the late witchcraft period fallen upon evil times. He is not the full-blooded Puritan prince of the power of the air, and he is a

strangely different being from the mediæval fiend.

So much by way of preface to a legend of Ayrshire in the year 1290, which, in spite of the absence alike of mare and witches, yet presents remarkable features of analogy to the tale which Burns told forever in 1790. One must anticipate a different point of view and a different treatment. There will be no witches, for the thirteenth century did not take its witches over-seriously. The devil will perhaps have a graver object in life. But there will be, if not a Kyle or Carrick, at least a Cunningham drunkard ; there will be a Cunningham public-house, with its fireside ; and deep potations will still have the effect of conjuring up the devil—to act, however, the part of an apostle of temperance reform.

Historians have to thank the “ Chronicle of Lanercost ” for many a solid fact and many a queer, miraculous tale. A first-class record—the work of at least two authors ( both probably Franciscan friars in Carlisle ) its earlier half ending about 1296—is well spiced with marvels illustrative as often of the cantrips of demons as of the power of St. Francis and the Mother of Mercy. The second half, from 1296 to 1346, is so much occupied with Anglo-Scottish fight and foray, dealt with very competently more in the spirit of a

man of arms than a man of prayer, that the satellites of Satan cease from troubling. The incident of 1290 is from the earlier half and from the miracle-loving hand. The friar, through his brotherhood, had excellent opportunities on both sides of the Border in the years of peace before the War of Independence. He had gleaned his information in many fields, and at least one notable confirmation of a contribution of his to Irish hagiology makes it possible to hold with strong probability that even his miracles are faithfully reflected from the gossip of his time.

Now to our tale. "For the sake of change of subject," says our holy friar in his annals of the year 1290, "there may here be related a thing that happened in Cunningham, in the kingdom of Scotland, which ought to terrify tavern-keepers and restrain drunkards. There was once—indeed there still survives, although now a changed man—a certain countryman of that province, William by name; a man stuffed with riches, but unduly intent upon stuffing his stomach. Oh, how gluttony (*gula*) degrades and enslaves a man! He used to slink away from his own abode and into another district, because he could not have them at home, and would there consume in carousals and potations the goods of other men, until

the hand of God laid hold of him in the following fashion. Once, as he sat alone beside the fire in the house of an innkeeper, he was rather devouring than drinking the ale he had bought, and when all the inmates of that house were busy at their work out-of-doors, there appeared to the foolish man the hideous figure of a spirit of the air sitting on the opposite side of the fire, with black body and ghastly face and fiery eyes of horrid magnitude. At sight of whom, the man of Bacchus was astonished, but, emboldened by liquor which sends the unarmed to battle, he began to inquire [of the figure] whose servant he was and what he wanted there. The other, with apparent pride, disdaining these demands, asked with a grin what person could be so very ill-informed as not to know him, the owner of a residence there, who for thirty years past, had held the foremost rank among the toppers of the place. 'And to show that I do not deceive you,' he said, 'come and see what I have gathered here from the gluttony of ne'er-do-weels.' At once, William jumped across the fire and beheld by the side of the spirit of deceit a vessel so full of abominations as well-nigh to drive the fool demented. 'What you behold,' said the servant of iniquity, 'I have collected from the vomitings of your boon com-

panions in your debauches.' Upon this, with his understanding awakened, which hitherto, as Solomon says, had not felt the rod ; and alive to his impending danger, he of his own free will uttered a vow to the Lord that never, under whatsoever necessity, for the remainder of his life, would he taste strong drink again ; which promise he still steadfastly keeps, to the wonder of all who had knowledge of him before. He acknowledges what he saw with his own eyes, and he related what is told above to two men of worth and credit with whom I was well acquainted."

The characteristics of the demon here make him explicitly the hand of God. This is quite a normal mediæval idea. Chaucer, in the Frere's tale, makes a fiend say of himself and his fellows :

" For som tyme we ben Goddes instruments  
And menes to done his comandements."

The allegation of the devil, in our own Frere's tale, that he was the champion toper of the district, opens up too wide a field of investigation to pursue here. It may mean that the toper was dead, and that this was a devil-ghost of the "goblin-damned" type to which Hamlet feared his father's spirit might belong. Chaucer's above-quoted fiend says :

" Som tyme we aryse  
With dede bodies in ful sondry wyse.

The devil in "Tam o' Shanter" is of quite another order from that which William saw across the hearth in the middle of the tavern floor. The two have in common the fact that each is really the subjective creation of a mind inflamed by drink. Among some curious points of contact is the chronicler's observation on the courage-bestowing qualities of ale. *Audacior ex potu* is as happy as Burns's own :

"Inspiring bold John Barleycorn!  
What dangers thou canst make us scorn!"

And the picture of William, quizzing the devil as to who he was and what he was after, is as whimsical an incongruity as the free-and-easy greeting which Burns himself addressed to Death when he foregathered so memorably with him after a late sitting at Tarbolton.

"Wi' usquebae we'll face the devil!"  
said Burns, and the saying is here completely vindicated.

The vessel of abominations is a realistic and positively Dantean touch, a very intense and powerful if coarse image, which will stand comparison with any in the catalogue of horrors in "Tam o' Shanter." It has the closest affinity to the lawyers' tongues and priests' hearts which the poet, on grounds not con-



vincing, revised out of his poem. The reformation of William doubtless commended itself to the friar, as a fact admirably fitted to furnish a very proper and improving conclusion for the terrification of tavern-keepers and their too-sedulous customers. Tam o' Shanter, on the other hand—it would have been complete artistic ruin to reform him and Burns ; wisely and dramatically stopped short, leaving us to our own imaginings, if we feel the need of an anti-climax.













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